



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# The Jewish Quarterly Review.

---

JULY, 1893.

---

## HEBREW AND GREEK IDEAS OF PROVIDENCE AND DIVINE RETRIBUTION.<sup>1</sup>

*[It has often been urged that the contents of the JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW are too exclusively "caviare to the general." To meet this objection, at least for once, a very popular lecture is here inserted; and to mark its character the better, the lecture-form has throughout been retained. What is now printed, however, represents considerably more than what was said.]*

LADIES and Gentlemen, or rather, I would to-night prefer to say, Students of the Jews' College, for my talk this evening is mainly intended for you. Not that I hope to be duller on this occasion than I have been on former occasions, though, perhaps, that is not saying much; but I want to indicate in outline a single paragraph out of a chapter of religious and moral investigation, which some students may work at in detail, and which all would be well advised in working at a little. I myself, from want of knowledge and of time, have not been able to pursue it far, so no one need fear that my remarks this evening will be technical or hard.

Most of you, gentlemen, have probably read some of the essays contained in the literary remains of Emanuel Deutsch. Almost everybody has at least read that wonderful article on the Talmud, which made its author famous

---

<sup>1</sup> A lecture delivered at the Jews' College Literary Society, on Sunday, June 4th, 1893.

between a night and a morning, an article, which, though it be occasionally inaccurate and frequently one-sided, is yet worth more than a dozen learned pamphlets of soulless dry-as-dusts, that bristle with names and dates and bibliographies. And some of you have doubtless read the charming memoir of Deutsch by that noble Englishwoman, Lady Strangford, who did so much to help and soothe the shy, proud scholar in his sickness, isolation and distress. There is a sentence in "a fragment concerning his studies," which, if my lecture were a sermon, I might use as its text: "As I grew up, Homer and Virgil stood side by side on my boyish bookshelf with the Mishnah and the Midrash." And he goes on to say how the study of the Talmud was quickly followed by the study of Plato. These words are as a parable. The successive, or if possible, the concurrent study of Greek and Hebrew should be the ideal for all youthful aspirants to the Jewish ministry, in other words, for all students of the Jews' College.

The Greek and the Hebrew, the Hebrew and the Greek, these two have been the chief contributors to all that we value and cherish most in modern civilisation. They are its founders, and their thoughts, ever variously blended, grafted and developed, not only constitute the indispensable preparation for a full understanding of our own thought in its various phases of religion, philosophy, politics and art, but they constitute also a large element of its very substance and life. They are bone of its bone, flesh of its flesh; still more, spirit of its spirit, *Geist* of its *Geist*.

And, mark you, Hellenic or Greek thought has had a wider range of influence than Hebrew or Jewish thought. The influence of Hebrew thought has not extended beyond ethics and religion; perhaps because its range has been thus restricted, its influence has been all the deeper; but the influence of Greek thought has penetrated everywhere—no aspect of human life, moral, political, social, literary,

artistic, has been left untouched by its all-embracing activity.

There is a foolish commonplace which we too often hear, I regret to say, from many a Jewish pulpit. The preacher desires to explain away the seeming particularism of the so-called election of Israel. He points out that Israel was chosen by God for the world's sake, and not for its own—excellent doctrine, against which I should never have a word to say, if any practical application were made of it—and then he goes on to show that other nations have been chosen by God for other purposes. Only two nations are mentioned in this connection, and of these two, England is never one. The two are Greece and Rome. Rome, we are told, was chosen to teach the art of government, the science of law; Greece was chosen to teach art—only art. Israel was chosen to teach religion and morality. It is a simple arrangement, but, unfortunately, erroneous.

No doubt many hearers go away and think that all the Greeks ever did for us was to fashion and carve a number of marble statues, curious fragments of which are safely guarded in the galleries of the British Museum and the Louvre. Well, for many people to think so will do no harm. But you students must not think so. You are students; and, therefore, the truth, in all its phases, the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, is that which, above all other things, you must desire to know. In your student years, at any rate—and I hope your student years will last your lives and be co-extensive with them—truth and goodness must be convertible terms.

Well, then, the influence of the Greeks, what we owe to Hellas, extends far beyond art. Even in politics we owe more to the Greeks than to the Romans. In the science of thought itself we are still disciples of the Greeks. No student of theology can go far without some acquaintance with philosophy, and philosophy, as we understand it, is the creation of the Greeks. But there is

still more : in the absolute material, in the very substance and content of our modern ethics, of our moral ideals and conceptions, there is a large and important element which we owe directly to Greece. And even in religion there are certain points in our faith to-day which you will find more fully and clearly stated in the Dialogues of Plato than in the Hebrew Scriptures. For his spiritual and religious benefit, as well as for many other reasons, I could wish that every student of this college were familiar with that masterpiece of translation and exposition, Prof. Jowett's noble English edition of the great Hellenic philosopher.

But now let me lead up to the particular subject of my lecture. It would, I think, be very helpful and stimulative if students were to compare and contrast the religious ideas and practices which are found in Hebrew, with those that they may come across in Greek literature. They will often find curious parallels and curious contrasts : the strength of the one will sometimes be the weakness of the other, and the defect of a quality in the one may be often interestingly illustrated by observing that it is, as it were the quality of a defect in the other. As subjects for comparison, I would instance the idea of liturgical or ceremonial purity, with the attacks made upon it, or the compromises effected with it in the course both of Greek and Hebrew history. Or, again, the conception and custom of animal sacrifice. We can compare the measure and kind of religious satisfaction which the custom afforded in Palestine and Greece ; and we can compare, too, the measure and kind of opposition against its use or misuse which arose from the Greek philosophers and the Hebrew prophets. Or, again, we may compare the Greek and Hebrew views about death and the life in Hades and Sheol : we may notice, too, in what respects the want of a distinct belief in a conscious and blissful life after death influenced the Homeric Greeks and the ancient Hebrews ; and then, again, in what ways the idea of a life after death, which should

be blissful for the good and painful for the bad, began in either people, and affected their religious and ethical beliefs. And sometimes more detailed illustrations may be of value. We can parallel, for instance, the curious alliance and compromise between prophet and priest which we see effected in the reforms of Josiah and the book of Deuteronomy with the function and place of Delphi in Greece, where the servants of Apollo so frequently seem to combine the instincts of the priest with the freer and more spiritual tendencies of the prophet or philosopher.

My subject this evening is other than any of these. I shall touch on it very sketchily : if a scholar of both literatures, such as the incomparable Bernays, were to deal with it, it would form a very interesting chapter of comparative religion.

I propose, then, to compare some Greek and Hebrew views with regard to the divine rule of mankind, as well as some explanations of the doubts which a general belief in God's rule on the one hand, and the actual facts of human life upon the other, suggested to men of thought and religion in Hellas and Judæa.

We shall, accordingly, start from a period in both countries when men have already begun to think—though not necessarily to doubt—on the relation of God to man. But this means that we start soon after literature opens. The earliest literature gives us a somewhat generalised reflection of popular ideas, and very soon these ideas form a basis from which more thoughtful minds may move forward, either to harmonise discrepancies or to expose them.

When I say that I propose to compare Greek and Hebrew ideas concerning the divine rule of man, you may immediately surmise that such comparison can only be comprised in contrasts and not in parallels. The Hebrews, you will say, were monotheists ; at all events, the writers from whose words the illustrations are to be drawn, worshipped only one God ; whereas the Greeks were polytheists. This

is true ; but, nevertheless, the Greek polytheism was not of a nature to render comparisons of this kind unfruitful or negative. To Greek popular belief, and partly also to Greek cultivated belief, the separate divinities could act independently of each other ; they could be separably and individually dishonoured or insulted, and each on his or her own account could punish the transgressor. But in such cases each god usually becomes a type of deity as a whole ; the insult and the punishment are alike generic. Secondly, even in the earliest literary period, all the gods are under the control of Zeus, who, so far as the general rule of man is concerned, becomes a supreme and over-mastering divinity. And lastly, in some important respects, the idea of a universal regularity and all-comprehensiveness of divine providence was reached earlier in Greece than in Judæa. The separate gods fuse either into the indefinite Godhead (ὁ θεός) or into an impersonal power (τὸ θεῖον), which rules over all mankind according to the same laws, and has no closer or more historic relation to one people than to another.

When a modern Jew or Christian sets himself to argue or write upon the relation of God to man, he starts with certain fundamental pre-suppositions. He not only believes in one God, but in a perfectly good God. God's goodness is not inconsistent with the existence of much misery, ignorance and crime. It has to be reconciled or fitted in with these, but they are never used to explain the character of God. God's attitude towards man, however hard this may be to credit, is one of love, not of envy. God is not regarded as a separate individual with rights. He has no desires and objects of his own apart from the world in which and above which he is ; he is not a king whose majesty can be insulted, or whose property can be injured, or whose privileges can be abused ; if his relation to man be likened to any earthly relationship, it is not that of

monarch to subject, but that of father to child.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, the modern Jew or Christian recognises the separate and personal relation of every individual human soul to God, and while acknowledging man's intimate connection with his ancestor and his race, persists in believing that in the relation of man to God and of God to man, this solidarity may be transcended and overcome. Thirdly, the modern Jew or Christian starts with very developed notions of good and evil. Mere outward prosperity is no longer, for him, the end and goal of human endeavour, just as mere outward adversity is no longer the supremest ill. Fourthly, he starts with ideas of social progress and of a possible gradual development of the whole human race to higher levels of goodness, wisdom and well-being. And, lastly, he usually starts with a belief in a future life, wherein, not merely the outward inequalities of this life may be put right—for this is a small point—but in which every human soul may reach its full capacity of good, and lose its taint, inherited or acquired, of madness and of evil.

Now the ancient Greek or Hebrew did not start with any one of these five pre-suppositions, and therefore, in certain ways, the problems of evil and of the relation of God to man were harder, while in other ways they were easier, to him than they are to us. His notions of good and evil were more limited to, and more closely identified with, outward prosperity and adversity, and therefore, the lack of correspondence between prosperity and the good, as between adversity and the wicked, was a greater puzzle to him than to ourselves. Moreover the want of a conception of human progress, and of a life of compensation and development after death, augmented the burden of the difficulty. But, on the other hand, our developed notions of evil and of good, our religious individualism and our purified conception of God, all contribute to make the problem of evil far more complex

---

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Fairbairn, *Christ in Modern Theology*, pp. 432-448.



and overwhelming to us than it was to them. Throughout the literature of the Old Testament (I must ask a Rabbinical scholar to reply for the Talmud), and throughout Greek literature from Hesiod to Plutarch, while gradually almost every feature of a modern theodicy is, at all events, indicated, if not worked out, we are always conscious that the full intensity of the problem has never been thoroughly grasped.

One more remark before bringing forward the particular details of our subject. Putting the religious level reached by a given people on one side, and neglecting also the character of its religion, any doubts about the justice of the divine rule will be more or less frequent and bitter according to three general considerations :

First, it is clear that the actual circumstances of the people, its measure of comfort and prosperity, will make a difference in its religious thought. If all classes are tolerably prosperous, old and imperfect ideas may continue far longer than the general level of religion in other respects would lead us to suppose. Secondly, there is the comparative reflectiveness of different races to be borne in mind. And, thirdly, there is a varying degree of melancholy, a deeper sense of human frailty and woe, in some peoples than in others. Putting the first aside, the second and third considerations will partly account for the fact that we get more forms and phases of doubt, and more varieties of solution, in Greek than in Hebrew literature, and both at an earlier stage of religious development. The Greeks were more reflective and more melancholy than the Hebrews. The Hebrews were braced up against the miseries of life by a never failing hopefulness, if not for the individual, for the race. As to the Greek melancholy, let every student read Prof. Butcher's essay on that subject in his charming book, "Some Aspects of the Greek Genius." Here let me say how much I have been helped by that book in writing this lecture. I shall be delighted if you will all read it, or at all events the first 233 pages of

it, if only to see, and to laugh as you do see, how shamelessly I have used and copied it in my remarks to you this evening.

The melancholy of the Greeks begins with Homer, who after all is in many ways so young and *lebenslustig*, who hates death as the greatest evil, and finds the distinguishing characteristic of divinity in the blissful immortality of its life.<sup>1</sup> Zeus himself bewails for a moment the hapless lot of "ill-fated men. For methinketh there is nothing more piteous than a man among all things that breathe and creep upon the earth."<sup>2</sup> And yet this piteousness, which Zeus acknowledges, is the gods' decree. It is "the lot the gods have spun for miserable men, that they should live in pain; yet themselves are sorrowless."<sup>3</sup>

In Hebrew literature we have, I fancy, to come down as late as Job for such a full recognition and understanding of the misery of man. After him Sirach speaks of the eternal ebb and flow of generation upon generation, in the very words and metaphor which Glaucus had used to Diomede so many hundred years before.<sup>4</sup> And miserable as the life of Hades may be, Herodotus, living in the very spring tide of Greek genius, anticipates Job's desire for that cheerless refuge, to the bitter in soul more sought for than hid treasure, where, at any rate, the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. "In the period of life, short as it is, no man is made by nature so happy that there will not come to

---

<sup>1</sup> Naegelsbach, *Homerische Theologie*, i. § 17—24. (3rd Ed. 1884.)

<sup>2</sup> *Iliad* XVII. 446, 447 (Lang Leaf and Myers' translation).

<sup>3</sup> *Iliad* XXIV. 525, 526.

<sup>4</sup> "As of the green leaves on a thick tree, some fall and some grow: so is the generation of flesh and blood, one cometh to an end and another is born" (Sirach xiv. 18). "Even as are the generations of leaves, such are those likewise of men: the leaves that be the wind scattereth on the earth, and the forest buddeth and putteth forth more again, when the season of spring is at hand; so of the generations of men one springeth and another passeth away" (*Iliad* VI. 146—149).

him many times, and not once only, the desire to be dead rather than to live; . . . thus, since life is full of trouble, death has become the most acceptable refuge for man.”<sup>1</sup> In Prof. Butcher’s essay you will see how this vein of melancholy runs through all Greek literature, and has given birth to passages of lovely poetry, which will always appeal to us, and meet with a yearning, strange response within our souls so long as man is man. Hope, on the other hand, so far as earth is concerned, was rather condemned as a false flatterer than welcomed and cherished as a comforter and a friend.<sup>2</sup>

So much for general introduction, which I trust will not be more interesting than the particulars on which we are now to enter.

Directly an ethical relation is established between God and man (and when Hebrew and Greek literature open this relation is already established), its simplest formula runs as follows: God is supreme over men. He rules them; and, in general, on these lines. He punishes the wicked, he rewards the good. The punishment and the reward are alike material, and their scene is earth. Thus the good man ought to be prosperous, the wicked man ought to be unhappy, and you should be able to deduce goodness from prosperity or wickedness from misfortune. I need scarcely add that the ideas of goodness and wickedness current in antiquity differed considerably from our own, and more especially that a very prominent category of the latter, which has now practically vanished, included all direct offences against Deity, any infringement or violation, whether intentional or involuntary, of his supposed privileges, property, or rights.

Seeing, then, that this desired correspondence between individual circumstance and desert has never been apparent in any human society, two questions present themselves.

---

<sup>1</sup> Herod. vii. 46. (Mr. Macaulay’s translation.)

<sup>2</sup> Schmidt, *Die Ethik der alten Griechen*, ii., 68—75.

First, if a doubt of divine justice, or if complaint against the obscurity of God's rule, be not raised, why is it not? Secondly, if it is raised, how is it answered? But I shall not be able to keep these two questions distinct, or to answer them *seriatim*.

I would rather return to those five pre-suppositions from which, as we saw, the modern Jew or Christian starts in his reflections upon the rule of God or the origin of evil, and on which he bases his theodicy. You will remember that the first pre-supposition was the absolute goodness, and, if I might use a strange expression, the absolute unselfishness of God. God can only desire the ultimate good of his creation, and nothing for himself.

Neither Greek nor Hebrew, as I have said, began his religious history with this conception, though both acquired it as the result of a long development. For, as any one who has read a few essays or handbooks on comparative religion well knows, there was a deep-rooted conviction in the most diverse races, still surviving in more than one modern superstition, that while men and gods are akin, or while man is the creation of God, the gods are jealous of their human kin or handiwork, and anxious to maintain the chasm which in dignity, greatness, capacity, or skill separates the mortal from the divine.

The conception of divine envy or jealousy plays a great part in Greek literature. In Hebrew literature the more completely moralised character of the national God left less room for it, and it assumes for the most part a form in which it has become half-reconciled with the prevailing justice of God. And where the Greeks feared the Deity's envy, the Hebrew feared his wrath. Nevertheless old ideas of divine jealousy in its simplest and purest form are easily discernible in the story of the Fall. Just as to the Greeks the distinguishing mark between God and man is the divine immortality, so in Genesis the jealous fear is expressed by God lest after the acquired knowledge of good and evil, man should eat of the tree of life, and

thereby, by becoming immortal, become divine.<sup>1</sup> Therefore is he expelled from Paradise. And precisely similar is God's fear at the building of the Tower of Babel. Unity of language had made the young race of man too powerful; the building of the tower is an earnest of further undertakings yet to come. "Nothing will be unattainable by them, which they have imagined to do." The gulf between God and man will be bridged over.<sup>2</sup> In these ancient legends the conception of envious fear is wholly unmoralised, but elsewhere we only find the divine wrath and not the divine envy regarded as a quality which is not limited and exercised by a purely ethical law.<sup>3</sup>

I turn back for the present to the Greeks, among whom from Homer onwards this notion of the divine envy as accounting for the limitations and vicissitudes of human life continually recurs. In the great tragedians it becomes moralised, as in the Hebrew prophets, while the philosophers attack it altogether. The instances in Homer are various; the gods are envious alike of too much skill, reputation, or happiness. Nowhere is the conception used to more exquisite effect than when Penelope, recognising her lord after she has made trial of him, declares, as she casts her hands about his neck and kisses him and welcomes him home: "It is the gods that gave us trouble, the gods who were jealous that we should abide together, and have joy of our youth, and come to the threshold of old age."<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Genesis iii. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis xi. 6.

<sup>3</sup> It might have been added that the ideas of the early legends in Genesis are not specifically Hebraic. The legends are borrowed from an outside source, and are only made partially consonant with the narrator's personal opinions. Cp. Smend, *Lehrbuch der alttestamentlichen Religionsgeschichte*, p. 122.

<sup>4</sup> *Odyssey* XXIII. 210-212. For divine envy in Homer, cp. Naegelsbach, *Homerische Theologie*, i., § 14; Lehrs, *Populäre Aufsätze aus dem Alterthum*, pp. 35-40. In a very interesting essay Hoekstra has attempted to prove that the idea of divine envy, *per se*, visited upon the righteous as well as upon the haughty and the boastful, did not arise much before the age of Pindar and Aeschylus, and that the supposed instances in Homer can be otherwise explained. He does not touch, how-

No Greek writer is more possessed of the truth and importance of this strange doctrine of divine envy, strange as it seems to us, than the great historian Herodotus. The fall of Cræsus, the miserable end of Polycrates, the death of Cyrus and the defeat of Xerxes, all illustrate the dictum put into Solon's mouth that "the Deity is altogether envious, and apt to disturb our lot." It is for this reason that in "the affairs of men there is a revolving wheel," the wheel of fortune, which now exalts and now debases.<sup>2</sup> Better, therefore, it is that "in some of our affairs we should be prosperous and in others should fail, and thus go through life alternately faring well and ill, rather than that we should be prosperous in all things. For (so runs the letter of Amasis to his friend, the Tyrant of Samos) never yet did I hear of any one who was prosperous in all things, and did not come to an utterly evil end at the last."<sup>3</sup> It is, as we gather from the examples of Herodotus, especially those in high place and station, who are most exposed to the envy of the gods. And here is the point where a parallelism between Greek and Hebrew notions can be observed, and from which the general conception showed itself susceptible of a gradual moralisation. Diogenes Laertius, in his life of Chilo, says that when Æsop was once asked what Zeus was doing, he replied, "He is humbling the exalted, and exalting the humble."<sup>4</sup> And so in Job it is regarded as a mark and prerogative of the Deity "to abase the proud and bring them low," or, as the Psalmist puts it, "God is the judge; he puts down one and

---

ever, on Od. XXIII. 210, and IV. 181. He denies the presence of the idea both in Theognis and Pindar, and holds that the first great writer to adopt it was Herodotus. (*De wangunst der goden op het geluk ook der rechtvaardigen, naar het grieksche volksgeloof tot op het midden van de vijfde eeuw. Verslagen en mededeelingen der koninklijke akademie van wetenschappen*, in Amsterdam. 1883. pp. 17-105.)

<sup>1</sup> Herodotus, i. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Ib., i. 207.

<sup>3</sup> Ib., iii. 40.

<sup>4</sup> Diog. Laertius, i. 3, 2 (τὰ μὲν ὑψηλὰ ταπεινῶν, τὰ δὲ ταπεινὰ ὑψῶν).

sets up another."<sup>1</sup> When even Xenophon does not hesitate to say (it is true that he is not speaking *in propria persona*), "Providence (*ὁ θεός*), as it seems, oftentimes delights to make the little ones great, and the great ones small,"<sup>2</sup> it is not surprising that Herodotus asserts the same doctrine with still greater clearness and force. It is put in the mouth of Artabanus, the uncle of Xerxes, when he is urging the king to abandon the expedition to Greece, "Thou seest how God strikes with thunderbolts the creatures which stand above the rest, and suffers them not to make a proud show; while those which are small do not provoke him to jealousy; thou seest also how he hurls his darts ever at those buildings which are the highest, and those trees likewise; for God is wont to cut short all those things which stand out above the rest. . . . He suffers not any other to have high thoughts save only himself."<sup>3</sup> As you hear these words, do not certain other words, written nearly 300 years before Herodotus, recall themselves to your mind? "For the Lord of Hosts has a day upon every one that is proud and high, and upon all that is raised up, that it may be brought low, and upon all cedars of Lebanon that are high and raised up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan . . . and upon every high tower, and upon every fortified wall . . . and the highness of man shall be bowed down, and the loftiness of men shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day."<sup>4</sup>

To the Hebrew prophet everything which was high and magnificent was tainted with pride, and was ever ready to assert itself against God, or, as Prof. Cheyne aptly says in a note on this very passage, "The ideas of eminence, pride and opposition to Jehovah, melt into each other in the Old Testament." But we clearly see from these verses in Isaiah that the prophet, speaking as God's advocate and

---

<sup>1</sup> Job xl. 11, 12; Ps. lxxv. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Hellenica*, vi. 14-23 (Mr. Dakyns' translation).

<sup>3</sup> Herod., vii. 10e.

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah ii. 12-17. Cp. Hoekstra *loc. cit.*, pp. 29-53.

in his name, has at bottom the same idea as the Greek historian. God cannot tolerate human greatness, which has been, as it were, independently won. Only the idea is so far moralised that with human greatness pride is supposed to be almost inevitably combined, and with pride an enmity towards God. Thus the jealousy of God becomes gradually transformed into hatred of an acknowledged ethical offence. Hence we can perhaps better account for the adages against pride in the Proverbs, and the peculiar way in which boastfulness among men is commonly associated in the Old Testament with boastfulness towards God.

The envy of the gods continues to be referred to down to the latest period of Greek literature; Pausanias, for example, and even Plutarch, give expression to it in various forms, and, as Lehrs has pointed out, it recurs in Roman literature too. But its partial moralisation began at an early date, and is already known to Herodotus himself. Just as in the Hebrew prophets the old notion of divine jealousy against mortal pre-eminence fades away into an enmity against pride and the more or less conscious opposition to Yahveh, so in Greece the quality which provokes the wrath and punishment of the gods is not mere greatness in itself, but that overweening insolence which either accompanies exceptional power, capacity, or success, or which is inevitably produced by them. This insolence the Greeks called *ὑβρις*; over against it they set that characteristically Greek virtue of *σωφροσύνη*, self-restraint, moderation, temperance, sanity, balance of mind, a due recognition of the limit of human power, and of the difference between the human and the divine. All this is involved in *σωφροσύνη*, while every violation of the virtue is a phase of *ὑβρις*, which can show itself not merely in haughty or violent deeds, but also in vain thoughts, in proud confidence, in swelling boasts.

This *ὑβρις* was specially hated by the gods. Hence the destroying envy of the Deity was transformed



into the just punishment of pride. *φθόνος* becomes *νέμεσις*. Thus, even in Herodotus, the fall of Croesus is not merely ascribed to the envy of God, but also to the divine *νέμεσις*: the great retribution befell him, "probably because he judged himself to be the happiest of men."<sup>1</sup> States, like individuals, may be seized with an access of insolence, leading them to undertakings not merely beyond their strength, but in their very nature improper and overweening. As one of these the Athenian expedition to Sicily might be regarded, and this is the meaning of those pathetic words of Nicias, in the matchless seventh book of Thucydides, where he addresses the Athenian soldiers before the retreat from Syracuse, and attempts to comfort them in their despair. Who knows, he says, that "our calamities may not be lightened? For our enemies have had their full share of success, and if our expedition provoked the jealousy of any god, by this time we have been punished enough. Others ere now have attacked their neighbours; they have done as men will do, and suffered what men can bear. We may, therefore, begin to hope that the gods will be more merciful to us, for we now invite their pity rather than their jealousy."<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting to note that license or boastfulness, whether in pleasure or in victory, in public or in private life, in thought or in deed, was held to be the specific characteristic of the barbarian, whereas temperance, the state of mind which in all things observed the command *μηδὲν ἄγαν*, was the characteristic virtue of the freeborn Hellene. And so among the Hebrews, humility and lowliness came gradually to be regarded as the distinguishing mark of the Jew; pride and insolence the mark of the heathen, the enemy alike of Israel and Israel's God. It is curious how similar a form the national particularism in each instance assumed.

The Greek tragedians gave a still deeper blow to the theory that any misfortune of man could be laid to the

<sup>1</sup> Herod. i. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Thucydides vii. 77. Prof. Jowett's translation.

charge of the envy or enmity of the gods. Students should read two essays on Sophocles which deal with this question, one by Dr. Evelyn Abbott in "Hellenica," and one by Prof. Butcher in "Some Aspects of the Greek Genius." Although the old ideas are sometimes put dramatically into the mouths of their characters, neither Æschylus nor Sophocles will admit that any suffering of man is ever in discord with the justice and providence of God. "He that, unconstrained and of his own free will, keeps justice, shall not be unblest, nor shall he ever perish utterly."<sup>1</sup> Of course the facts of life become still more difficult to explain on this theory; but, nevertheless, Æschylus is confident that calamity betokens sin, and that sin must issue in calamity. Like the Psalmists, he is assured that the sinner will suffer in the end.<sup>2</sup> The righteous, on the contrary, need fear no evil. He directly contradicts the current doctrine of divine envy, but indicates that his own view is exceptional. "Mankind," sings the chorus in the Agamemnon, "have an ancient saying—it was framed and uttered of old—that a mortal's happiness, when grown up to the height, brings forth and dies not childless; that out of good fortune springs insatiable misery to plague the race. But I have my own thought apart, that impious deeds beget a multitudinous brood, like their progenitors; but the house that ever holds to right hath ever fair issue of good fortune."<sup>3</sup>

These lines and those which immediately follow connect themselves with another method, by which an imperfectly moralised conception of Deity was enabled to account for curious and startling disasters, whether befalling the individual or the State.

The wrath of God, it was supposed, might be directed against a man or a community from no ostensible or

---

<sup>1</sup> *Eumenides*, 553, 554. Prof. Campbell's translation. (*The Oresteia* of Æschylus, translated into English prose. 1893.)

<sup>2</sup> Cp. *Choëphoræ*, 313 : δράσαντι παθεῖν τριγύρων μῦθος τάδε φωνεῖ.

<sup>3</sup> *Agamemnon*, 749-759.

obvious reason; yet in order, as it were, partly to justify the calamity or overthrow which he seeks to effect, God incites to a sin, which he then punishes as if it had been voluntarily performed. This is the doctrine of divine infatuation, which plays a considerable part in Greek literature. It was not wholly unknown to the Hebrews. One famous instance is the Davidic census, which sinful act—for in those days a census was regarded as a sin—had been suggested to David by the very Deity who punished the people so sorely for the transgression which he himself had instigated and devised. You all remember how the Chronicler, writing in a more developed age, avoids the difficulty.<sup>1</sup>

Passing over instances of infatuation or *ἄτη* in Homer, it is advisable to quote again a much-quoted passage from Theognis, which seems to set forth the doctrine in its barest and baldest form:—"Be not over-hasty in anything; all the works of mankind have their due season, which is best. Yet oftentimes a man hasteneth to do a mighty deed in quest of gain, a man whom God of his purpose doth turn aside to great error, and maketh him think that what is evil is good—ah, how lightly!—and that what is for his service is evil."<sup>2</sup>

It is to this passage in Theognis that the chorus in the *Antigone* of Sophocles perhaps allude when they say, "For with wisdom hath some one given forth the famous

---

<sup>1</sup> Another curious instance of infatuation is that of Rehoboam, who, by divine influence, rejects the old men's counsel in order that the sin of his father may be visited upon himself (1 Kings xii. 15).

<sup>2</sup> 401-406. (Bergk. *Poetae Lyrici Graeci*, 4th Ed. II., p. 153.) It must be admitted that Hoekstra, whose essay I read after the above passage was already printed, argues with much cogency that Theognis is only referring here to an improper and overstrained quest of riches and position. The infatuation is, in that case, a punishment, and has its adequate cause (pp. 56-68). Butcher accepts the ordinary view. "The popular form of the doctrine of divine infatuation is expressed, for instance, by Theognis, that a man of good intentions is often misled by some supernatural power into grievous transgressions, so that evil appears to him good, and good evil." *Some Aspects*, p. 115.

saying that evil seems good, soon or late, to him whose mind the god draws to mischief; and but for the briefest space doth he fare free of woe."<sup>1</sup> Among the words which Plato in his ideal Republic would not allow the young men to hear is a line of Æschylus, which contains the same conception:—"God plants guilt among men when he desires utterly to destroy a house."<sup>2</sup> Herodotus, without apparently a shadow of difficulty or doubt, relates an explanatory story as to the miserable end of the victor of Marathon, according to which, it being the will of God or of destiny that Miltiades should die in ignominy, he is induced by the priestess of Demeter and Persephone at Paros, acting under divine inspiration, to commit a sacrilege, which leads to his discomfiture and ruin.<sup>3</sup> A scholiast on the chorus in the Antigone quotes two lines from an unknown Greek poet, which, according to Prof. Jebb, were probably the original of the now familiar Latin, "Quem Deus vult perdere, dementat prius."

Even in this bald form the belief in a divine infatuation which issues in condign punishment found its advocates among Greek writers till a very late age. It is alluded to by Pausanias, and so rational a thinker as Polybius is inclined, in certain puzzling instances of strange individual and national folly, which resulted in failure or ruin, to ascribe their cause to infatuation and the wrath of heaven.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Antigone*, 622-625, Prof. Jebb's translation.

<sup>2</sup> *Æsch. Frag.*, 160. *Rep.* 380 A.

<sup>3</sup> Herod. vi., 134, 135.

<sup>4</sup> Naegelsbach quotes from Pausanias a passage (x. 2), in which a case of sacrilege on the part of the Phocians is ascribed either to their mind being injured by the god or to a natural disposition to set fame above piety. In an author who makes such frequent allusion to the divine envy, this alternative is not surprising; but the two instances in Polybius xxviii. 9, and xxxvii. 9, are both very interesting. In the one, as no natural cause for the folly of the Macedonians can be discovered, he is inclined to put it down (εἵπειε τις ἄν) to δαιμονοβλάβεια and divine wrath; in the other, where the folly is that of an individual, he thinks the test of infatuation may be said to be "when men aim at bold enterprises and risk their life, and yet neglect the most important point in their plans, though they see it all the time and have the power to execute it." Mr. Schuckburgh's translation.

More commonly, however, an attempt was made—both among the Hebrews and the Greeks—only to use the doctrine of infatuation where it could be made, at least partially or apparently, consistent with divine justice.

Just as the idea was common that God helps those who help themselves (as in a fragment of Æschylus, *φιλεῖ δὲ τῷ κάμνοντι συσπεύδειν θεός*), so the opposite notion was also prevalent that God stimulated the wickedness of the wicked—urged him forward in his career of sin, in order that his fall might be more rapid and more sure.<sup>1</sup> The passage on this point which the text-books quote most frequently, because it puts the doctrine most clearly, is one from the speech of Lycurgus against Leocrates. Leocrates, in the panic after the battle of Chaironeia, had fled from Athens to Rhodes, and “in the face of the stern edict denouncing all deserters from the city during the crisis,” he did not venture to return till six years afterwards, when he doubtless hoped that the affair was forgotten. Lycurgus, however, prosecuted him for treason, and argued that the return of Leocrates to Athens was due to the influence of some god, in order that the accused, who had fled before a glorious danger, might meet with an inglorious doom at the hands of the very men whom he had deserted. “The gods,” he says, “do nothing more readily than pervert the minds of wicked men.”<sup>2</sup> You will find other passages to a similar effect from the Orators quoted in Schmidt.

Among the Hebrews, Isaiah implies the existence of a similar doctrine. The very mission of the prophet is ironically conceived as an injunction to make the heart of the people fat and its ears heavy, lest it should hear with its ears and its heart should understand, and it should be converted and healed.<sup>3</sup> And so, at a

<sup>1</sup> Butcher, *Some Aspects*, p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> *Cont. Leocratem*, 91, 92. Mahaffy, *Hist. of Greek Lit.*, vol. II., pt. II., p. 158.

<sup>3</sup> vi. 9, 10; cf. xxix. 10, and perhaps xxviii. 13; cf. further the infatuation of Amaziah to punish him for his idolatry, 2 Ch. xxv. 20, and also 1. Sam. ii. 25.

much later date, the prayer goes up, "Why dost thou make us to stray, O Yahveh, from thy ways, and harden our hearts, so that we do not fear thee?"<sup>1</sup> Here the sense of sin and the sense of calamity are merged into each other, they are two aspects of the same unity; and as the calamity is too marked and strange to be otherwise explained than as the direct will of God, so too the sin, the necessary condition of calamity, can only be assigned to the selfsame cause. But God is only brought in as the author of that sin which, as it were, succeeds to sin. Man starts offending; God maintains or develops. Prof. Butcher has also noted the parallelism between Hebrew and Greek thought. "As we read in the Old Testament," he says, "that 'the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart,' so in Æschylus, 'when a man is hasting to his ruin the god helps him on.'"<sup>2</sup>

The section in the *Persae* from which this line is quoted seems to imply, not only that Xerxes was divinely helped to his ruin because of his insolence and overweening conviction of power but that his overthrow was providentially determined in the interests of Greece.<sup>3</sup> It is obvious that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart was brought about for similar reasons. In the case of Sihon, king of Heshbon, the particularist motive predominates to the exclusion of any other, as also in the explanation afforded with respect to the kings and cities which were subdued by Joshua.<sup>4</sup> In the narrative of Herodotus, heaven-sent dreams lure Xerxes to the expedition against Greece after the warnings of Artabanus had made him for a time abandon the project, just as the subsequent victory of the Greeks is more than once ascribed to the overruling providence of God.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah lxiii. 17; cf. lxiv. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Butcher, *Some Aspects*, p. 116. *Persae*, 742.

<sup>3</sup> Compare the whole scene with the Ghost of Darius.

<sup>4</sup> Deut. ii. 30; Joshua xi. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. viii. 13, 109; ix. 78. Before leaving this branch of our subject it is interesting to note that from certain passages in the *Orators* and *Euripides*, quoted by Schmidt (I. pp. 235, 236) it would appear that the old complaint of Zeus in the *Odyssey* (I. 32-34) would have occasionally been justifi-

I pointed out incidentally that the fear of divine anger was more frequent among the Hebrews than the fear of his jealousy. But this anger was also recognised by the Greeks. It was mainly roused, according to the views of either nation, by some, perhaps involuntary, offence against the prerogatives and privileges of Deity. Religious rather than moral iniquity incites the vengeance of the gods. As was only natural, it was the sudden occurrence of strange or violent calamity, whether in the life of individuals or of states, which seemed to press most obviously for a supernatural explanation. To account for these, the wrath of God was alone adequate, while that wrath itself was accounted for in most cases (though by no means in all) on the hypothesis of some human sin, whether positive or negative, conscious or involuntary. Earth-quakes, plagues, inundations and droughts betokened divine indignation, and in Greece the art of divination and the oracle of Delphi were invoked to discover the reason of that anger and the method of allaying it. You will remember parallel religious phenomena in the books of Samuel. The popular view is explained and modified by the historian Polybius, in the following interesting passage:—

“Those things,” he says, “of which it is possible to find

---

able at Athens. Men attempted to excuse their own sins by attributing them to the influence or unmotivated hatred of a god. In a rather striking passage in his speech against Timarchus (190) Æschines rebukes this tendency. Not the gods, but human license and greed, are the authors of crime. The wild lusts of the body and unsatiated desire (*αἱ προπετεῖς τοῦ σώματος ἡδοναὶ καὶ τὸ μηδὲν ἱκανὸν ἡγεῖσθαι*)—these are for each one his goddess of vengeance (*ταῦτα ἐστὶν ἐκάστῳ Ποινὴ*). When Helen in the *Troades* attempts to excuse her treachery by casting the blame on Aphrodite (945-950), Hekuba retorts that it was Helen's own desire which was the tempting Aphrodite, and that many a self-willed folly of man is extenuated in the name of the goddess:

ἦν οὐμὸς υἱὸς κάλλος ἐκπρεπέστατος,  
ὁ σὸς δ' ἰδὼν νιν νοῦς ἐποιήθη Κύπρις.  
τὰ μῶρα γὰρ πάντ' ἐστὶν Ἀφροδίτῃ βροτοῖς,  
καὶ τοῦνομ' ὀρθῶς ἀφροσύνης ἄρχει θεᾶς. (987-990.)

the origin and cause of their occurrence, I do not think we should refer to the gods." But "those things of which it is impossible or difficult for a mere man to ascertain the causes, such as a continuous fall of rains and unseasonable wet; or, on the contrary, droughts and frosts, we may reasonably impute to God and Fortune, in default of any other explanation; and from them come destruction of fruits, as well as long-continued epidemics and other similar things, of which it is not easy to find the cause. On such matters, then, we, in default of a better, follow the prevailing opinions of the multitude, attempting, by supplications and sacrifices, to appease the wrath of heaven (ἐξιλασκόμενοι τὸ θεῖον), and sending to ask the gods by what words or actions on our part a change for the better may be brought about, and a respite be obtained for the evils which are afflicting us."<sup>1</sup>

There is also a curious passage in Diodorus Siculus on this subject. It appears that in the year 372 B.C. violent earthquakes and inundations befell the Peloponnesus, and two towns in Achaia, Helice and Bura, were entirely destroyed, and many of their inhabitants were killed. Upon which Diodorus goes on to say that a considerable dispute arose as to the cause of these visitations; the natural philosophers (οἱ φυσικοὶ), as is their wont, referred their origin not to the divine will (εἰς τὸ θεῖον), but to physical and necessary circumstances, while those who were more religious-minded (οἱ εὐσεβῶς διακείμενοι πρὸς τὸ θεῖον), among whom is the historian himself, accounted for the disasters by assigning them to the wrath of the gods. And Diodorus then proceeds to explain how the people of Helice had committed a signal impiety against Poseidon.<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, as might be imagined, takes the philosophic side in such disputes. The laws of nature, to put his view in modern language, are divine, but their particular applications are not separately ordered and

---

<sup>1</sup> xxxvii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Diodorus, xv. 48, 4—49.



arranged by divine decree: thus, he says, "it does not rain in order that the corn may grow, but of necessity, . . . . and if anybody's corn is thereby injured it did not rain in order that this injury should take place, but the ruin of the corn was an accident."<sup>1</sup>

The same difference of opinion is noticeable in the case of disease. Where a given malady was rare or horrible, the tendency existed to refer its origin to the anger of heaven. Leprosy among the Hebrews, and epilepsy among the Hebrews and Greeks, were regarded as divine plagues, the latter being even called in Greek *ἡ ἱερὴ νόσος*, the sacred disease. Hippocrates challenges the accuracy of this appellation, and elaborately proves that epilepsy, like all other diseases, has its natural causes, and is therefore no more and no less divine than any other malady. In a sense all diseases are divine, for they depend on the same outward elements of nature, and these elements may be regarded as divine; but in another sense all are human, as all alike have their fixed causes, and are susceptible of cure.<sup>2</sup> To what lengths the fear of divine hostility might extend Plutarch's delightful essay on Superstition bears evidence. In every misfortune the superstitious man lays the blame, "not on man, or chance, or himself, but on God." Every trouble is a divine plague. "He does not venture to help himself under what has happened, nor to remedy it, nor to resist it, lest he should appear to fight against God, and to resist when he is chastised; but if sick, the physician is pushed away; if in sorrow, the philosopher who comes to advise and comfort has the door slammed in his face. 'Let me alone,' he says, 'to suffer my punishment—impious, accursed as I am, hateful to the gods.'"<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Physics*, II, 8, 198b; cp. Zeller, *Philosophie der Griechen*, II, 2, p. 333, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Hippocrates, *περὶ ἱερῆς νόσου*, ed. Kühn, I., p. 614, and 587-594. Cp. *περὶ αἰρων ὑδάτων τόπων*, I., p. 561. Butcher, *Some Aspects*, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> *De Superstitione*, VII. *Plutarch's Morals*, translated by C. W. King (1882), p. 266.

Meanwhile, however, the greatest spirits of Greece as well as of Judæa advanced to the conception of the essential goodness of God. They saw that the relation of the Creator to the created world must be one of pure beneficence; he acts upon it for the world's sake, not for his own; or, if you like to put it so, his glory is identical with the greatest possible well-being of all that he has made. God has no pleasure in evil, as such. Vengeance is alien to the conception of Deity. Man can injure man; he cannot injure God. "If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? And if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him?"<sup>1</sup> No divine punishment can have any other object than the well-being of the creature who receives the punishment, or the well-being of his kind; it is no satisfaction to the Deity who inflicts it.

Plato and Aristotle directly combat the popular notions of divine jealousy and anger. To Plato the goodness of God is the cause of creation. For "God is good, and the good can never have any jealousy of anything. And being free from jealousy, he desired that all things should be as like himself as they could be. This is in the truest sense the origin of creation and of the world, as we shall do well in believing on the testimony of wise men. God desired that all things should be good and nothing bad, so far as this was attainable."<sup>2</sup> Have subsequent ages found anything much better than the simple forms of theology (*οἱ τύποι περὶ θεολογίας*) which Plato lays down in the Republic as the fixed rules to which the religious tales of the poets in the ideal State are to conform? *God is good and God is true.* Yet the deduction which Plato draws from the first rule, namely, that "God is not the author of all things, as the many assert, but the cause of a few things only, and not of most things which occur to men," will be the source of fresh perplexities. "Few are the goods of

---

<sup>1</sup> Job xxxv. 6. Cf. xxxv. 7, 8; xxxii. 2, 3; vii. 20, 21.

<sup>2</sup> Timæus, 29 E.; cp. Phædrus, 247 A. Arist. *Metaphysics*, I., chap. ii. (982b-983a).

human life, and many are the evils, and the good is to be attributed to God alone; of the evils the causes are to be sought elsewhere, and not in him." And of human misery it may only be said "that the wicked are miserable because they require to be punished, and are benefited by receiving punishment from God; but that God, being good, is the author of evil to any one is to be strenuously denied."<sup>1</sup> Whence, then, are the evils which are not punishments that benefit or purify? Well, even if we can get no answer, it is an infinite gain to be delivered from all unworthy fear of God.

A similar service was wrought for the Jews by the prophet Ezekiel. The exiles were sunk in apathy; moral effort seemed useless to them. The wrath of God was implacable; his punishments were vindictive, not educational. Against these gloomy conceptions Ezekiel protested, laying down the noble doctrine that God's pleasure was not in the death of the wicked, but in his repentance and amendment. It is remarkable that Ezekiel, who, as regards the heathen nations, was so painfully particularist, and makes God almost rejoice in the prospect of their imminent doom—a doom the object of which is to secure the divine glory, and not the ultimate amelioration of the condemned peoples—as regards Israel is emphatically the teacher of hope. The utmost well-being, both physical and moral, of Israel is in itself the sanctification of the divine name. For one people, at any rate, the word goes forth: "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" The doctrine stood in urgent need of universalisation, but, so far as it went, represented a great truth for all time.

In maintaining the doctrine of God's desire for the

---

<sup>1</sup> *Rep.*, 379 C., 380 B.

welfare of every Israelite, Ezekiel came in violent conflict with another old conception by which the rule of God and the facts of life had been jointly harmonised and explained. It may be remembered that the second pre-supposition of any modern Jew or Christian who discusses the relation of God to man was the adequate recognition of religious individualism.

Our common experience makes it plain that one man suffers, if not *for*, at all events *with*, or *through*, the guilt of another. That a wife suffers through the villainy of her husband, a child through the guilt of his father, a nation through the crime of its rulers, are obvious facts of daily life. Now, if every suffering is punishment, the inference seems inevitable that the retribution of one man's sin is made to fall upon another. That such an inference immediately conflicts with our conceptions of God is one of the reasons why we no longer identify calamity with punishment. But in antiquity, as everybody knows, the solidarity of the family and the state was much more intimate than with us, and the separate being and rights of the individual much less clearly conceived and regarded. Hence it seemed no real injustice if the sins of fathers were visited upon their children, the vices of a monarch upon his people. Contrariwise, the virtues of a king are reflected in the prosperity of his people, of a father in the welfare of his sons.<sup>1</sup>

This solidarity of family and race was well-known to and accepted by both Greek and Hebrew, as their respective literatures abundantly testify. Even accidental and temporary association with sinners, so the Greeks believed, may prove fatal to the righteous. To be on board ship in company with wicked men may prove fatal to their innocent fellow-voyager. For as shipwreck and drowning were

---

<sup>1</sup> For the extended effect of the vice and virtue of a king, cp. Hesiod's *Works and Days*, 222-247, and other references in Schmidt, I., pp. 67, 68. The varying fortune of the Jewish and Israelitish kingdoms according to the virtue or vice of their monarchs partly illustrates the same idea.

supposed to be favourite methods of divine punishment, the accidental presence of a few righteous souls cannot counter-balance a majority of sinners. The gods must use their opportunity. It needed the piety of an Abraham to obtain the pardon of Sodom, even if but ten righteous men were found within its walls. Æschylus has given expression to this thought in some striking lines in the *Seven against Thebes*. "Fie upon the fortune that in the unions of mankind joins together the righteous man and the impious! Whatsoever we do, there is nought more evil than evil companionship; the fruit of it is not for the gathering; the field of sin bears the fruit of death. Sometimes, embarked with hot-brained voyagers, men of a rascal sort, a pious man does perish likewise with the abominable crew. Sometimes in a city a righteous one, joined with others cruel to man and forgetful of God, being found contrary to nature in the same net, dies by the undistinguishing blow of the divine spear."<sup>1</sup>

The wide-ranging influence which the goodness or badness of rulers and statesmen may have upon their fellow-men is too obvious and necessary a fact to provoke religious discontent and doubt. It is only when the strictly personal sin of the ruler is supposed to be directly visited upon his people that a more developed sense of justice begins to rebel. Thus the author of the last chapter of the books of Samuel puts into David's mouth a powerful protest against the punishment of his sin in the matter of the census falling not on himself or his family, but upon the wholly innocent people. Seventy thousand perish, and David justly complains: "I have sinned, and have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me and against my father's house." The solidarity of the family is accepted; the solidarity of the race has been pushed too far for endurance.

In this case, however, the punishment quickly followed

---

<sup>1</sup> *Seven against Thebes*, 584-595. Dr. Verrall's translation. Schmidt I., pp. 66-68.

the commission of the sin ; more important and difficult were those more numerous instances where, as it seemed, the punishment was wholly deferred till another generation, and made to fall upon the descendants of the sinner. Two classes may be distinguished. First, the visitation of the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and unto the fourth generation ; secondly, the punishment of whole communities for offences committed by their ancestors.

A postponed punishment of communities and States appeared even in later times and to comparatively advanced thinkers more easily justifiable than the same law of retribution in the case of individuals. It was acceptable to Pausanias, who himself adduces examples of the punishment of collective or civic guilt being delayed for numerous generations.<sup>1</sup> Among the Hebrews, the two phases of delayed retribution are merged into each other. Thus the captivity of the whole people is alleged to be the punishment for the sins of Manasseh, and the doctrine against which Ezekiel protested, as expressed in the proverb of the sour grapes, not only implied that the son was suffering for the sins of his father, but that the generation of the Exile was being visited for the sins of its ancestors. To a certain extent, the theory of transmitted responsibility was always retained. Israel, of the past and the present, being conceived as forming a single whole, any given calamity could easily be construed as the punishment of a past iniquity : the race had a life of its own, and was regarded as a living organism. As a man of sixty may be rightly punished for the sin which he wrought at thirty, so may Israel be justly punished in the nineteenth century for its iniquities of the seventeenth. This explanation of the corporate and perpetual responsibility of Israel, which is, I fancy, the true explanation of a very persistent idea, is closely similar to one of Plutarch's arguments for the

---

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, i. 36, 3 ; iv. 17, 3 ; vii. 15, 3.

wise propriety of God holding over the punishment of a given community in one generation, and inflicting it upon another. Isocrates, before him, had already said that "Cities ought, far more than private persons, to practise deeds of virtue, and shun evil deeds. For a godless and wicked man may perchance die before he pays the penalty for his sins; but cities, *inasmuch as they do not die*, await both the punishments that come from men, and those that come from the gods" (*De Pace*, 120). Plutarch elaborates the same idea. "A city," he urges, "is one continuous entity, a sort of creature that never changes from age to age, or becomes different by time, but is ever sympathetic with, and conformable to itself, and is answerable for whatever it does or has done for the public weal, as long as the community by its union and federal bonds preserves its unity. For he that would make several, or rather any quantity of cities out of one by process of time would be like a person who made one human being several, by regarding him now as an old man, now as a young man, now as a stripling."<sup>2</sup>

More interesting than this question of the perpetual responsibility of States is that of the transmission of guilt from father to son through a particular family or race. This, too, was, as we know, a commonly accepted dogma in antiquity. We need not here recount the instances of it in the Hebrew Scriptures. It may be noted, however, that before a growing individualism begins its protest, the postponement of punishment from father to son is positively regarded as due, not to the injustice, but to the mercy of God. So in the instance of the child of Bathsheba, and still more in the case of Ahab, for the sake of whose tardy repentance God deliberately announces to Elijah that the punishment of his sin shall be put off till the days of his son. It is interesting also to observe that whereas the editor of the book of Kings can still fitly

---

<sup>2</sup> *De sera numinis vindicta*, chapter xv. Mr. A. R. Shilleto's translation.

explain the calamitous end of Josiah, the most virtuous king of any who ever sat upon the throne of Judah, because of the still unatoned-for sins and provocations of Manasseh, the Chronicler drops this explanation, and substitutes for it an obvious invention of his own, in order to account for Josiah's ignominious death by his presumption and disobedience.<sup>1</sup> In Greece we find Solon accepting the doctrine as part of the divine slowness of retribution, which more than one subsequent writer variously defended as characteristic of God's method of punishment in contra-distinction to man's. "Such is the vengeance of Zeus, and he showeth not anger like a mortal man at each act. But always he marketh for ever him that hath a sinful heart, and in the end it is assuredly brought to light. Now he taketh vengeance straightway, and again he tarrieth; but if they who do wrong escape, and the gods' doom cometh not upon them to take them, yet it cometh all the same hereafter; the guiltless pay for their deeds, their children and their seed after them."<sup>2</sup> This method of divine punishment was held to be mainly or specially adopted when an offence had been directly committed against a god, or against such men as were under his protection. Hence, retribution of perjury was commonly thought to involve the ruin of the sinner's descendants. Hesiod already gives utterance to this idea (*Works and Days*, pp. 282-285), and a picturesque story of Herodotus embodies the same conception, which was further supported by the sacred oracle of Delphi.<sup>3</sup>

In Greece, indeed, as doubtless originally in Israel, the punishment which affected a man's descendants, still more which cut short his race, was supposed to be directly felt by the ancestor in Hades. Hence, so long as ancestor-worship and the cult of the dead existed, its injustice

---

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings xxiii. 26; 2 Chron. xxxv. 21, 22.

<sup>2</sup> Solon, xiii. 25-32. Cp. Theognis, 203-208 (reading  $\delta\epsilon$   $\delta\epsilon$  with Hartung in 205).

<sup>3</sup> Herodotus, vi. 86, cp. i. 13.



would be less obvious.<sup>1</sup> This is perhaps one reason why Herodotus, as in the story of Glaucus just alluded to, maintains the idea so firmly. He tells another curious story how the Spartans incurred the wrath of the demi-god Talthybius, the herald of Agamemnon, because they had put to death the ambassador of Darius. At last two noble Spartans "voluntarily offered to pay the penalty to Xerxes" for the ambassadors of his father. They were accordingly sent to Persia "to be put to death." Xerxes, however, partly not to incur himself the blame of killing ambassadors, and partly not to free the Spartans from their guilt, refused to accept the penalty. The two Spartans returned home. Not many years afterwards their two sons chanced to be sent as ambassadors to Asia, and were betrayed and carried captives to Athens, where they were put to death. And Herodotus argues that the mere fact that the wrath of Talthybius did not cease till it was fully satisfied, and then fell upon ambassadors, was "only in accordance with justice," but that it happened to come upon the sons of the men who went up to the king on account of the wrath—by this it is evident that the matter came to pass by the act of the Deity caused by this wrath.<sup>2</sup>

Among the Tragedians, as among the Orators, the notion of transmitted guilt or of delayed punishment is frequently expressed, and in Euripides protests against it are freely made. It is Æschylus in whose dramas the problem comes most prominently to the fore. How he dealt with and modified it is shortly and lucidly explained by Prof. Butcher. It is the tendency to guilt, not the actual guilt itself, which is inherited. "A man is master of his own fate; he may foster the tendency or he may resist it. An act of will is necessary to wake the curse into life. The chain of crime may at any point be broken, though the poet rather

---

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Schwally, *Das Leben nach dem Tode*, p. 31 seq.

<sup>2</sup> Herod., vii. 134—137. Cf. Naegelsbach, *Die nach-homerische Theologie des griechischen Volksglaubens bis auf Alexander*, I. 22.

exhibits, for the most part, the natural continuity of guilt ; that as crime engenders crime in the individual heart, so in a house the guilt of the fathers tends to lead the children into new guilt, and to extend itself over a whole race.”<sup>1</sup>

It is somewhat remarkable that the visitation of parental sin upon children should have been attacked at so early a stage in Greek literature as Theognis. Very pronounced is his complaint, “ O Father Zeus, may it be the gods’ will that . . . whoso in lightness of heart deviseth froward deeds in his spirit, heeding the gods not at all, should hereafter, himself and none other, pay the penalty of evil, and may the license of the father no more turn out evil for the children. And may the children of an unrighteous father, who plan what is righteous and fulfil it, regarding thy wrath, O son of Cronos, . . . pay no more for the transgression of their father. May this be the will of the blessed gods. But now he that doeth evil escapeth, and another coming after beareth the evil.”<sup>2</sup> In the succeeding verses he complains of the misery of the just and the prosperity of the wicked.

It was not till the seventh century and the age of the Exile that the doctrine was attacked in Judæa. Ezekiel’s individualism need not be further dwelt upon here. It is more interesting for our purpose to note how Plutarch justifies delayed punishment in families, as he had justified it in the case of States. “ The principle of justice,” as Prof. Butcher says, “ is in either case the same.” But in his justification he practically abandons the old doctrine in its primal form altogether ; for his main argument is that the sons of wicked parents have wicked tendencies. There are in families “ certain dominant characteristics, birthmarks of the family, which, if vicious, need a corrective discipline as often as they reappear in successive generations.”<sup>3</sup> Hence the error of the philosopher Bion, who says, “ The Deity,

---

<sup>1</sup> Butcher, *Some Aspects*, p. 114, and cp., p. 109—116.

<sup>2</sup> Theognis 731—742.

<sup>3</sup> *Some Aspects*, p. 113.

in punishing the children of the wicked for their father's sins, is more ridiculous than a doctor administering a potion to a son or a grandson for a father's or a grandfather's disease." For the punishment apparently inflicted upon the innocent is really inflicted upon one who already has "the seeds of vice in his nature," which, by anticipatory punishment, may perhaps be for ever prevented from developing further. The punishment is, therefore, disciplinal, resembling the training or regimen which a man is made to undergo whose father has suffered from some physical malady. Thus Plutarch wholly changes the character of the punishment, and with it of the doctrine which he essays to uphold. What was retribution has become discipline. This is clearly indicated in two remarkable passages, in the first of which he vindicates the moral character of God, and in the second explains away the old dogma precisely as the wording of it in the Second Commandment has been explained away by later Jewish tradition. "God does not retaliate upon the wrongdoer as having been ill-treated by him, nor is he angry with the robber as having been plundered by him; nor does he hate the adulterer as having himself suffered from his licentiousness; but it is to cure him that he often punishes the adulterer or avaricious man in embryo before he has had time to work out all his villainy, as we try to stop epileptic fits before they come on." And, secondly, "The gods do not visit all the offences of parents on their children; but if a good man is the son of a bad one, as the son of a sickly parent is sometimes of a good constitution, he is exempt from the punishment of his race, as not being a participator in its viciousness."<sup>1</sup>

Plutarch wrote at a time when individualism had woke up to claim the fulness of its rights. In ancient Israel, and probably in ancient Greece, the individual, and

---

<sup>1</sup> *De sera numinis vindicta* xx., xxi., Mr. Shilleto's translation. Cf. the passages in Job referred to above.

especially the man of humble station, seems to have thought that neither his excellence nor his sin greatly concerned the ruling providence of God. He was, therefore, neither immediately inclined to murmur at his misfortunes, nor over-fearful that his iniquities would be remembered and chastised by God. This is the meaning of the widow of Zarephath's complaint to Elijah, that her intercourse with him, the great prophet and man of God, had been only productive of calamity. He had but come to call her sin to remembrance and to slay her son. But developed reflection, both Hebrew and Greek, became convinced that the small, as well as the great, were under the care and control of God, and that his providential omniscience extended to all. In a fine passage in the *Laws*, Plato seeks to establish the doctrine philosophically, pointing out that God, the wisest of beings, is surely not inferior to "human workmen, who, in proportion to their skill, finish and perfect their works, small as well as great, by use of the same art."<sup>1</sup> Plato still maintains the inexorable law of punishment and reward, only, as we shall see, his idea of reward and of punishment are very different from those of Homer, Hesiod, or Herodotus. In striking parallelism with the famous words of Psalm cxxxix.—I admit that the parallelism has been slightly heightened in the Master of Balliol's translation—he declares: "If you say, 'I am small, and will creep into the depths of the earth,' or, 'I am high, and will fly up to heaven,' you are not so small or so high but that you shall pay the fitting penalty, either here or in the world below."<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Laws*, 902 E.

<sup>2</sup> *Laws*, 905 A. For the views of the Stoics, compare Cicero *De Natura Deorum*, II., 65 and 66, with Mr. Mayor's notes and references (Vol. II. p. 288-291); and Zeller, III., 1. p. 177, n. 1. Chrysippus admits a divine neglect of "the small" as one possibility, among others, for explaining the misfortunes of the good. πότερον ἀμελουμένων τινῶν, καθάπερ ἐν οἰκίαις μείζοσι παραπίπτει τινὰ πίτυρα καὶ ποσοὶ πυροὶ τινες, τῶν ὅλων, εὐοικονομουμένων. (Plut. *The Contradictions of the Stoics*, chap. xxxvii.)

Thus far, then, no kind of palliative, not only for the very existence of evil and suffering, but for its apparently unjust allocation, has been obtained. It was first of all necessary to clear away the immature, inadequate, or immoral explanations, before any better answer could be attempted. When all notions of envy or jealousy have been swept away from the divine nature, when it was recognised that God punishes as a father for the welfare of the sufferer and his kind, and in no case for the vindication of his own honour or the advancement of his own glory; and when also it was understood that God, as a ruler from without, does not visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, the way was cleared for a certain amount of progress to be securely and permanently made.

Putting aside the conceptions of a life beyond the grave for the individual and of a gradual progress of human society on earth, the only possible palliative, for it is no real explanation, of evil lies in a modification of the old ideas concerning outward adversity and divine retribution. Palliative and not explanation, because the difficulties are looked at from a better point of view, but are not solved; palliative and not explanation, because, in the very process of apology, the problem at one point is accentuated and increased.

The old and simple conception assumed, as we saw, that, if there be a divine power which rules the world, serious calamity should, in one aspect, betoken sin, and in another aspect punishment. In the second place it assumed that "outward adversity" is always a misfortune. Calamity is evil. Language in its earlier stages confuses the two ideas together by using one word for both. The Hebrew *Ra*, for example, may mean moral wickedness or physical disaster. If, on the other hand, the facts of life plead strongly for supposing that calamity is not always the consequence of sin, how will it fare with its other aspect of punishment?

Without entering into the vexed ethical question of the

meaning and object of punishment, we may note that no theistic religion has ever wholly dispensed with the necessity of retribution, however much the idea itself may have been spiritualised and refined. At the present day, however, we not only clearly see that in the infinite intricacy and interconnectedness of human society, virtue and vice directly affect the happiness and misery of many others besides those from whom these qualities proceed, and that no precise correspondence of circumstance with desert is even conceivable, but also that, whatever form divine retribution ought to assume, it ought *not* to imply an exact meting out of a proportionate "reward" to every virtue, and a proportionate punishment to every sin. And this we clearly perceive, even on the supposition that there may be a reward and a punishment independent of or exterior to the virtuous or sinful acts themselves, or to the soul from which they sprang. It is for this reason that we are irritated by the Chronicler's method of conceiving the past history of his nation, according to which he is so careful to devise a sin for every calamity and a punishment for every sin.

The propriety of divine retribution rests, I imagine, partly upon the conception of justice expressed in the familiar proverbs, Tit for tat, or Measure for measure. In its crudest form, it represents the principle of the *lex talionis* applied to God as the supreme Judge. And it is a remarkable fact, witnessing to the immense strength and durability of certain elemental notions of justice, that any striking correspondence between suffering and sin is still commonly looked upon as clear evidence for the over-ruling providence of God. I do not find that either Greek or Hebrew made any *direct* attack upon the rule of measure for measure as a worthy principle for God's retributive action, either in this world or in another. "For words of hatred, let hatred be the recompense, and for each deathful stroke, let the striker be struck to death. That he who does must suffer is the utterance of an immemorial saying."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Choëphoræ*, 305-313.

This is the Æschylean conception of divine justice, and Plato himself, who profoundly modified the ideas of retribution and of evil current in his time, would accept "the law of retaliation" for murder, not only as one on which man should act, but also as the law of God. For an ancient tradition or myth plainly declares that "the justice which guards and avenges the blood of kindred, follows the law of retaliation, and ordains that he who has done any murderous act should of necessity suffer that which he has done. He who has slain a father shall himself be slain at some time or other by his children,—if a mother, he shall of necessity take a woman's nature, and lose his life at the hand of his offspring in after ages."<sup>1</sup>

Diodorus as well as Herodotus is glad to point out any striking example of divine retribution—and by "striking" they mean "proportionate"; and Pausanias mentions an instance of tit-for-tat retribution (*τίσις Νεοπτολέμειος* he says such punishment was commonly called, because Neoptolemus, who slew Priam at the altar of Zeus, was afterwards himself slain at the altar of Apollo), which he expressly refers to the agency of God.<sup>2</sup> This instance is the more noteworthy, because it is not connected with murder. You may also remember that the Wisdom of Solomon, which is partly Greek and partly Hebrew in its origin, while recognising other motives in punishment, yet frequently emphasises the element of vengeance and of strictly proportionate retribution. Neither Greek nor Hebrew, therefore, seems to have felt, that if every misfortune *were* a punishment, and if punishment followed on the heels of every sin, the goodness of God's rule might be even more susceptible to attack than it is at present with all the undeserved miseries of the good and all the undeserved prosperity of the wicked.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Laws*, 872 E, 870 E.

<sup>2</sup> Naegelsbach, *Nach-homerische Theologie*, vi. 13 (p. 342). Limburg-Brouwer, *Histoire de la Civilisation morale et religieuse des Grecs*: Vol. vii., pp. 95, 96.

If, then, God's principle of justice be to reward the good and to punish the bad, and yet calamity befalls the former and prosperity the latter, the only possibility for faith is either to change the character of outward adversity, and outward well-being, as well as the quality of the reward and the punishment which are truly divine, or to admit that there are other and co-ordinate purposes in adversity, even when regarded as a divine dispensation, besides and beyond the mere infliction of punishment and retribution. All this implies the emergence of moral evil out of physical evil, and the superiority of the inward good of the soul over the outward good of circumstance and environment.

The first palliative is to regard outward suffering as disciplinary. This view of it we have already met with in Plutarch, who transformed the old doctrine of the punishment of paternal sin falling upon innocent children into a highly ethical theory of divine education. In the later writings of the Hebrew Scriptures the same conception is fairly frequent. A timely dose of adversity and affliction may prevent youthful license or occasional transgression from growing into hardened and habitual sin. Through such chastisement men may learn submission and humility, turning betimes to the practice of virtue. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept thy word." "Happy is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." In all these instances it is not supposed that the chastisement, even on the strict theory of retribution, is wholly undeserved, but that the motive and occasion of it are purely educational. The affliction, which may perchance seem more than adequate for the offence, is really a blessing in disguise. For no man, according to the prevailing Hebrew doctrine, is ever sinless; and, therefore, the chastisement of love is never wholly unnecessary or wholly undeserved. Eliphaz, who



uses the same language as the Psalmist and the author of Proverbs i.-ix., and Elihu, who elaborates the doctrine at greater length, both imply that suffering is purificatory; in other words, that, either in act or disposition, there is something in the sufferer which needs purification. Even the good man is not sinless; but in his chastisement he shows resignation and repentance, while the wicked man hardens his heart and is destined to ruin and doom.<sup>1</sup> Job, who is conscious, *ex hypothesi*, of his innocence, as he confessedly is a man of supreme and acknowledged merit, is unable to accept this argument as a sufficient explanation for the calamities which have befallen him. I do not find any indication in the Bible that one partial justification of both physical and moral evil may be that it is the crude, but necessary material through which the greatness of man may be called into play.<sup>2</sup> Suffering is regarded as a discipline and a purge: not yet as directly productive of noble deeds and character, without any regard to previous laxity or sin.

Among the Greeks popular proverbs were current to the effect that man learns by suffering.<sup>3</sup> But the intention of these hardly rose above the level of the mediæval Latin "*Experientia docet*," or the English "A burnt child dreads the fire." The sentiment is expanded by Æschylus in a famous chorus of the Agamemnon to about the same amount of meaning as the verses in Psalm cxix. Zeus is celebrated as he who shows to man the way to wisdom "by ordaining this firm law—'He learns who suffers.' In sleep there steals before the heart the pain of remembered suffering, and submission comes to men who thought not of it."<sup>4</sup> But this remembered suffering was also the punishment of guilt. Plato enlarges and deepens the doctrine

---

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Kuenen, *Onderzoek*, iii., 2nd ed., p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> Of moral evil as well as of mere outward adversity. The sin of A may often evoke the heroism and nobility of B.

<sup>3</sup> They are given in Wecklein's note on Agamemnon, 187.

<sup>4</sup> *Agamemnon*, 186-196. Prof. Campbell's translation.

into a theory of punishment, whether human or divine, and one of the great paradoxes of the Gorgias is the thesis that it is better to suffer for wrongdoing than not to suffer. "The unjust, or doer of unjust actions, is miserable in any case—more miserable, however, if he be not punished, and does not meet with retribution, and less miserable if he be punished and meets with retribution at the hands of gods and men."<sup>1</sup> Hence the miscalled prosperity of the wicked is no longer a puzzle. It is in itself the greatest evil to which they could possibly be subjected. Their soul is sick, and God suffers them not to meet with the soul's medicine and be healed. For just punishment is the cure of vice, the soul's disease. "Now the proper office of punishment is twofold: he who is rightly punished ought either to become better and profit by it, or he ought to be made an example to his fellows, that they may see what he suffers, and fear, and become better." (Plato thus allows an incurable residuum of the worst criminals.) "Those who are improved when they are punished by gods and men are those whose sins are curable; and they are improved, as in this world so also in another, by pain and suffering, for there is no other way in which they can be delivered from their evil."<sup>2</sup> Pressing the educational power of adversity still further, it seems tolerably natural to move forward to the idea of even wholly undeserved calamity being an advantage to the righteous, but undeveloped, soul; but on this point I do not find that Plato has clearly expressed himself. His own deepest belief undoubtedly was that whereas to the wicked the outward goods of life are traps and pit-falls ("for I plainly declare that evils, as they are termed, are goods to the unjust and only evils to the just, and that goods are truly good to the good, but evil to the evil")<sup>3</sup> to the righteous

---

<sup>1</sup> *Gorgias*, 472 E. The basis of this doctrine is, of course, the further thesis, that the good are happy and the wicked miserable, of which more further on.

<sup>2</sup> *Gorgias*, 525 B.

<sup>3</sup> *Laws*, 661 D.

all the varying incidents of life work together for his ultimate good. "This, then, must be our notion of the just man, that even when he is in poverty or sickness, or any other seeming misfortune, all things will in the end work together for good to him in life and death; for the gods have a care of any one whose desire is to become just and to be like God, as far as man can attain the divine likeness, by the pursuit of virtue."<sup>1</sup>

In two plays of Sophocles, the *Philoctetes* and the *Œdipus Coloneus*, a great reward is the ultimate result of undeserved suffering. But not only so, for it has been contended that it is indirectly taught that such sufferings "are often necessary to the development of character," seeing that "without them we should know nothing of the strength and majesty of *Œdipus* or *Philoctetes*."<sup>2</sup>

That trouble and adversity might serve as the grindstones on which the righteous could sharpen his capacity for well-being is a deeper explanation of apparent evil which was put forward by Stoic philosophers. So in *Epictetus*: "It is difficulties which show you what men are. Therefore, when a difficulty falls upon you, remember that God, like a trainer of wrestlers, has matched you with a rough young man. For what purpose? you may say. Why, that you may become an Olympian conqueror; but it is not to be accomplished without sweat."<sup>3</sup> *Seneca*, in his essay on *Providence*, employs the same argument at considerable length. "God bears a fatherly mind towards good men, and loves them in a manly spirit. 'Let them,' he says, 'be exercised by labours, sufferings, and losses, that so they may gather true strength.' Thus God hardens, reviews, and exercises those whom he tests and loves; he

---

<sup>1</sup> *Rep.* 613 A.

<sup>2</sup> *Hellenica*. Mr. Evelyn Abbott's *Essay on Sophocles*, p. 65, cp. pp. 59-60. Butcher, *Some Aspects*, pp. 124-129. But compare, too, Jebb's introduction to his edition of the *O. C.*, pp. 22-24. Schmidt's *Ethik*, I., p. 77.

<sup>3</sup> *Dissertations*, I., 24, cp. the characteristically Stoic chapter I., 7. Mr. Long quotes from Ovid *Tristia*, iv. 3, 79, "Quae latet inque bonis cessat non cognita rebus, Apparet virtus arguiturque malis."

does not pet the good man ; he tries him, hardens him, and fits him for Himself.”<sup>1</sup>

The last palliative of calamity consisted in showing that outward misfortunes are either a needful discipline to check the flowing tide of youthful license, and of that tendency to sin which is inherent in us all, or that they are the divinely appointed stepping-stones, on which we may rise to higher things. In either case they are the means to an end, that end being the moral education and development of man. In a transcendental sense the outward evils of life, so far as they are *really* the means to *such* an end, would be apparent only. From this argument we pass naturally to another, in which the riddle of undeserved adversity or prosperity is brought one degree nearer solution. But, as we shall subsequently see, the problem of evil itself emerges, after all that has been said, well nigh as complicated and as intractable as ever.

By no writer, whether Greek or Hebrew, has this argument been set forth with more winning grace and persuasive power than by the incomparable Plato. But Plato is not the creator of the argument, for it is far older than he, and in one form or another is likely to suggest itself to reflective minds at a certain stage of a nation's growth, or in certain conditions of its existence. The argument asserts that outward prosperity is not the greatest of life's goods, and outward adversity not the sorest of life's evils ; or, in other words, that the highest, or as some would say, the only real, good is intellectual, moral, or religious, independent of and indestructible by fortune ; and that the sorest, or as some would say, the only real, evil is ignorance and sin and separation from God, the evil of the soul, which no amount of prosperity can rectify or counterbalance or cure. Hence we might almost say that the only punishment which is truly divine is that which is

---

<sup>1</sup> *De Providentia*, I. fin., II. 4. Mr. Stewart's translation.

begotten by or involved in sin, just as the only true bliss is the unsought consequence of good.

In the Hebrew Scriptures this doctrine, which has exercised such an enormous influence upon mankind, and contributed so effectively to the noble endurance of trouble and pain, is not yet frequently maintained. But in two or three incidental passages we may trace the beginnings of it, and it would be a peculiarly interesting subject for a scholar well versed in the Rabbinic and mediæval literature of the Jews, to work out its fuller and more definite development. In the Book of Proverbs the excellence of "wisdom" is opposed to outward wealth, and appraised above it. "Wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour." This teaching points but to one end. The real good is "wisdom," for whoso neglects her "wrongs his own soul, all they that hate her love death." A different aspect of the one true good is presented by the Psalmist; to him that good is communion with God. In Psalms xxxvi. and lxxiii. the deduction for which we seek seems on the point of accomplishment. "Thy loving-kindness is better than life," exclaims the one Psalmist. "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is nought upon earth that I desire beside thee," exclaims the other. "To be near to God is my happiness: *die Nähe Gottes ist mein Gut.*"<sup>1</sup>

Here is the temper clearly manifest which could withstand the scaffold and the stake. But it is a noticeable fact about the Jews that while the members of no religious community in times of adversity have more clearly shown, and show more clearly, that spiritual good is for them more attractive than material good—so that the latter was and is constantly sacrificed for the sake of the former—the "idealisation of suffering," the depreciation of outward

<sup>1</sup> The LXX. of Ps. lxxiii. 25-28 is very emphatic:—*τί γάρ μοι ὑπάρχει ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ; καὶ παρὰ σοῦ τί ἠθέλησα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς; . . . ἔμοι δὲ τὸ προσκολλᾶσθαι τῷ κυρίῳ ἀγαθόν ἐστιν.*

good and outward evil, and the habitual localisation of all true good and all true evil within the soul, have not been as prominent, so far as I am aware, either in their religious and ethical literature or in their liturgy, as the past, and even the present, facts of their history would have confidently led us to surmise.

For the origin and earliest expression of the doctrine in Greece, reference would probably have to be made to the fragments of the old Orphic theology, and to the traditions of Pythagoras. It partly rested upon the opposition of soul and body, and was closely connected with theories of immortality and metempsychosis. Punning on similarities of sound, men said that the body was a tomb in which the soul was buried because of former sin. As the practical deduction of such theories could only be that man should seek goodness and wisdom, neglecting the pleasures and controlling the desires of the body in order to secure the final emancipation of the soul, the stress of importance in the phenomena of earthly life was removed from the one and centred upon the other. For wisdom and goodness are as obviously the virtue and satisfaction of the soul, as length of days, prosperity and riches are the satisfaction and goal of the body. The lack of the second becomes trifling in comparison with the overwhelming importance of the first.<sup>1</sup>

It was, however, not till Plato that these doctrines found full expression and an adequate philosophical basis. It is hardly possible to pick out and quote short illustrative passages just because the opposition between the pleasures of the body and the bliss of the soul, or the teaching that the greatest and only true evil is moral evil, are such integral portions of the entire Platonic philosophy.

Theological students should read with special care the *Phædo* and the *Gorgias*, and if they give scarcely less attention to the words of Plato's English expounder and

---

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Zeller, *Philosophie der Griechen*, I., 5th ed., p. 57 *seq.*

translator than to those of the master himself, they will not be unrewarded for their trouble. That paradox of the Gorgias, which we have already discussed, "it is better to suffer for wrong-doing than not to suffer," depends on another paradox, "it is a greater evil to do than to suffer injustice." Thus "he who is unjustly put to death is less wretched and less pitiable than he who kills him." For the "men and women who are gentle and good are also happy, as I maintain, and the unjust and evil are miserable," and "to go to the world below, having one's soul full of injustice is the last and worst of evils." "I tell you Callicles, that to be boxed on the ears wrongfully is not the worst evil which can befall a man, nor to have my person or my body cut open, but that to smite and slay me and mine wrongfully is far more disgraceful and more evil; aye, and to despoil and enslave and pillage, or in any way to wrong me and mine, is far more disgraceful and evil to the doer of the wrong than to me who am the sufferer."<sup>1</sup> It is obvious that such teaching, substantiated in different ways and confirmed by endless variety of illustration and argument, was in itself of the nature of a Theodicy. Either the unjust is unhappy, or his pleasure is a false pleasure; the just and the pious and the wise, on the other hand, are happy in the true sense (an identification "which has an excellent moral and religious tendency"),<sup>2</sup> and in the last resort they have their reward in themselves, even as the wicked their retribution. For if what men call calamity affects the body and not the soul, then indeed since "the true philosopher is entirely concerned with the soul and not with the body," "always occupied in the practice of dying," "in the release of the soul from the chains of the body," it is plainly evident that "no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death."

---

<sup>1</sup> *Gorgias*, 469 B., 470 E., 452 E., 508 E.; cp. for the difference between the "goods" of body and soul, *Laws*, 661 A-663D.

<sup>2</sup> *Laws*, 663 B.

<sup>3</sup> *Phaedo*, 67 D.E.; *Apology*, 41 D.

Does it then follow that outward prosperity and adversity are of no account, and that their unequal distribution suggests no religious difficulty whatever? While maintaining their comparative insignificance in comparison with the prosperity and adversity, that is, the good and evil of the soul, and while urging that the wise and good have a higher happiness, and the unjust and ignorant a deeper pain to compensate the one for his unmerited misfortune, and the other for his unmerited pleasure, Plato does not go so far as to assert that there is no value whatever in outward goods and no evil whatever in outward adversities. He consistently maintains that an excessive disparity between virtue and desert, even as regards that desert which is not psychical, and therefore no *necessary* concomitant of virtue, is not the natural or inevitable condition of things on earth, just as it will not be the condition of things for the disembodied spirit in another world. Thus in the *Republic* he first elaborately proves his thesis of the nobility and excellence of virtue apart from consequences; this occupies more than nine-tenths of the whole; and only then can he say "we have fulfilled the conditions of the argument; we have not introduced the rewards and glories of justice, which, as you were saying, are to be found in Homer and Hesiod; but justice in her own nature has been shown to be best for the soul in her own nature."<sup>1</sup> Pure justice has been weighed against pure injustice and found superior. But this having been accomplished, there is now "no harm in enumerating how many and how great are the rewards which justice and the other virtues procure to the soul from God and men both in life and after death." And as the converse to the rewards of the good, there follows the punishments of the wicked; both are frequent in this world, both are inevitable in the world to come. Yet reward is but the consequence, not the

---

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, 612 B.



stimulus of virtue, and punishment is not effected for the glory of God, but for the purification of the sinner, or as a warning to mankind.

We all know how the idealism of Plato was exaggerated and even perverted by the Stoics. By their doctrine of the indifference of all outward circumstance, the problem of physical evil was solved at the expense of violating the universal instincts of human nature. Nevertheless, in the exaggerations of the Stoics, most of us will discern a truth, however crudely worded. Disciples of the Stoics rose triumphant over misery by denying its existence. And many have still to steel their hearts to misfortunes, which are inexplicable, either as witnessed in others or as personally undergone by themselves. Different medicines are needed for different natures, and the physic which soothes and strengthens at one season may not be suitable for another. The stern and uncompromising morality of the Stoic philosophers will never wholly lose its power or its charm; it is an ethic which is also a theology, and by its very rigour justifies God. Few persons who care at all for such reading will remain quite unaffected if they acquaint themselves with those two translations by Mr. Long in which the teachings of the two most attractive of all the Stoics—the Stoic slave and the Stoic emperor—are comprised. Here is a passage from the meditations of the emperor, which enforces the essentially Stoic doctrine of the moral, and consequently the absolute indifference of external adversities. “That which does not make a man worse, how can it make a man’s life worse? But neither through ignorance, nor having the knowledge but not the power to guard against or correct these things, is it possible that the nature of the universe (*ἡ φύσις τῶν ὅλων* = God) has overlooked them; nor is it possible that it has made so great a mistake, either through want of power or want of skill, that good and evil should happen indiscriminately to the good and the bad. But death certainly, and life, honour and dishonour, pain and pleasure, all these things equally happen to good

men and bad, being things which make us neither better nor worse. Therefore they are neither good nor evil."<sup>1</sup>

Let us, before passing from this section of our subject, hear some wise words of the Master of Balliol, which are closely connected with it, and form a suggestive commentary upon the passage from Antoninus. "There is a further paradox of ethics, in which pleasure and pain are held to be indifferent, and virtue at the time of action and without regard to consequences is happiness. From this elevation or exaggeration of feeling Plato seems to shrink: he leaves it to the Stoics in a later generation to maintain that when impaled or on the rack the philosopher may be happy (cf. *Rep.* 361 *seq.*). It is observable that in the Republic he raises this question, but it is not really discussed; the veil of the ideal state, the shadow of another life, are allowed to descend upon it and it passes out of sight. The martyr or sufferer in the cause of right or truth is often supposed to die in raptures, having his eye fixed on a city which is in heaven. But if there were no future, might he not still be happy in the performance of an action which was attended only by a painful death? He himself may be ready to thank God that he was thought worthy to do Him the least service, without looking for a reward; the joys of another life may not have been present to his mind at all. Do we suppose that the mediæval saint, St. Bernard, St. Francis, St. Catherine of Sienna, or the Catholic priest who lately devoted himself to death by a lingering disease that he might solace and help others, was thinking of the 'sweets' of heaven? No; the work was already heaven to him and enough. Much less will the dying patriot be dreaming of the praises of man or of an immortality of fame: the sense of duty, of right, and trust in God will be sufficient, and as far as the mind can reach, in that hour. If he were certain that there were no life to come, he would not have wished to speak or act otherwise than he did in the cause of truth or of

---

<sup>1</sup> *Meditations*, ii. 11; cf. iv. 39, ix. 1, etc.

humanity. Neither, on the other hand, will he suppose that God has forsaken him, or that the future is to be a mere blank to him. The greatest act of faith, the only faith which cannot pass away, is his who has not known, but yet has believed. A very few among the sons of men have made themselves independent of circumstances, past, present, or to come. He who has attained to such a temper of mind has already present with him eternal life ; he needs no arguments to convince him of immortality ; he has in him already a principle stronger than death. He who serves man without the thought of reward, is deemed to be a more faithful servant than he who works for hire. May not the service of God, which is the more disinterested, be in like manner the higher ? And although only a very few in the course of the world's history—Christ himself being one of them—have attained to such a noble conception of God and of the human soul, yet the ideal of them may be present to us, and the remembrance of them be an example to us, and their lives may shed a light on many dark places both of philosophy and theology.”<sup>1</sup>

It would have been outrageous to mangle this noble passage by curtailment, nor has it, even in its entirety, led us far away from our own subject. And its last words suggest a way back ; for the existence of suffering and evil is one of the dark places in theology to which the Master of Balliol alludes, and yet we may say that it is their existence which has created idealism in philosophy and heroism in life. And so we pass to the consideration of another “ palliative,” closely allied to the last, which seems to have been frequently employed by the Stoics, and can be traced back as far as Herakleitus ; we meet with it even to-day. Evil, it is urged, is the shadow of good. Scarcely more real than a shadow, on the one hand, and as inevitable as the shadow, upon the other. This justification for its existence applies specially to moral evil, and it was used to account for wickedness and sin.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Dialogues of Plato*, II. p. 315.

Chrysippus declared that "nothing can be more foolish than the opinion of those who think that there can be good if there were not evil." The opposite is necessary to the existence and realisation of that to which it is opposed. How could there be a sense of justice if there were no injustice? What is bravery if not the opposite of cowardice, and how is temperance known but through intemperance, its opposite?<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to see this argument laughed at, though not perhaps wholly refuted, by Plutarch. Are we, he says, to pray to the gods that wickedness may always continue, since without it virtue would vanish away? Has God no knowledge of good, because he has no experience of evil? Must one member of a chorus sing out of tune that there may be melody in the whole? Did the good need so enormous a counter-balance of evil? So he quizzes the Stoics with baffling questions which even now have hardly received their replies.<sup>2</sup>

The argument that evil as the opposite of good is the means through which virtue becomes realised resolves itself into another, which was also a favourite of the Stoics, but was borrowed by them from the philosophy of Plato. It is that evil, whether physical or moral, has its value and its explanation from the point of view of the whole. Deck it out as you will, this argument, in the last resort, comes to little more than a pious acceptance of divine wisdom as the final cause of both the evil and the good which pervades the universe. If there be wisdom somewhere, there must, if God be God, be wisdom everywhere; if there be goodness in one point, there must, if God be God, be goodness in all points, and thus evil fades away into the illimitable abyss of the divine. The questions which God is made to hurl at Job have a similar moral. Explain the whole and you will understand the parts. If you stand

---

<sup>1</sup> Aulus Gellius, vii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Plutarch, *De Stoicorum repugnantibus* xxxii.—xxxvii.; and *De communibus notitiis adversus Stoicos* xiii.—xix.

baffled before the whole, you must be willing to accept the part. Receiving good as good, you must receive evil as good's masked counterpart.

In what ways did the Greeks dress up philosophically this abiding lesson of resignation and of faith?

Chrysippus argued that physical evil was a necessary sequence of good. For example, the excellence of the human body required that the head should be composed of bones peculiarly minute and delicate. But the consequence is that the head is more liable to be broken by blows, and is less substantially defended. You cannot, therefore, have the excellence without its danger. Such an argument seems to us of as little value as it seemed to Plutarch when the same Stoic philosopher alleged that "evil has a limit which distinguishes it from accidents generally, for evil in a manner comes into being according to the reason of nature, and is not wholly useless in regard to the universe as a whole; for without it the good would not be." Plutarch again asks, Is there no melody in a choir though none sings out of tune; or no health in the body, though no limb is sick? Was consumption made for the well-being of men's bodies, and gout for the speed of their feet? The existence of physical evil seems as unnecessary as moral evil. Of both the question holds, "Is there no good among the gods in heaven because there is no evil?"<sup>1</sup> Yet these very arguments over which Plutarch makes merry, brought satisfaction and tranquillity to the noble soul of Antoninus, and in his mouth they seem to assume a more convincing and reassuring form: "Asia and Europe are corners of the universe; all the sea a drop in the universe; all the present time is a point in eternity. All things are little, changeable, perishable. All things come from thence, from that universal ruling power, either directly proceeding, or by way of sequence (*κατ' ἐπακολούθησιν*). And accordingly the lion's gaping jaws, and that which is poisonous, and

<sup>1</sup> Plut., *De communibus notitiis*, chap. xiii. *De Stoicorum repugnantiis*, chap. xxxv. Zeller, *Phil. der Griechen*, III. 1. 3rd ed., p. 173—176.

every harmful thing, as a thorn, or mud, are after-products of the grand and beautiful. Do not, then, imagine that they are of another kind from that which thou dost venerate, but form a just opinion of the source of all." So, too, of moral iniquity: "We are all working together to one end, some with knowledge and design, and others without knowing what they do. But men co-operate after different fashions: and even those co-operate abundantly, who find fault with what happens, and those who try to oppose it and to hinder it; for the universe had need even of such men as these."<sup>1</sup>

Thus the sin and the undeserved prosperity of some men, and the unmerited suffering of others are justified by the unperceived necessities of the whole. In the words of Plato: "The ruler of the universe has ordered all things with a view to the excellence and preservation of the whole . . . . and you are created for the sake of the whole and not the whole for the sake of you. . . . This is also the explanation of the fate of those whom you saw, who had done unholy and evil deeds, and from small beginnings had grown great, and you fancied that, from being miserable, they had become happy; and, in their actions, as in a mirror, you seemed to see the universal neglect of the gods, not knowing how they make all things work together, and contribute to the great whole."<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Thoughts*, vi. 36, 42.

<sup>2</sup> *Laws*, 903 B. C., 905 B. The same line of argument is adopted by Philo, if the *De Providentia* be truly his: "God causes the violent storms of sea and rain, not for the injury of those who traverse the sea, or of those who till the earth, but for the general benefit of the whole of the human race; for with his water he cleanses the earth, and with his breezes he purifies all regions beneath the moon, and by the united influence of both he nourishes and promotes the growth and brings to perfection both animals and plants. And if at times these things do injure those who put to sea or till the land at unreasonable moments, it is not to be wondered at, for these men are but a small portion of the human race, and the care of God is exerted for the benefit of all mankind. As, therefore, in a gymnastic school, oil is placed there for the common benefit of everyone, but still it often happens

It is easy to detect fallacies in such arguments and weak points in such consolations, but they pointed the way to a permanent conclusion. Upon the ruin of the old theories of solidarity of family and race, a higher and more universal solidarity has been successfully built up. And this solidarity, answering as it does to the facts of human nature and circumstance, even if it explains them not, allows room for sacrifice as well as for resignation. It recognises that the results of goodness and wickedness pass with necessity beyond the individual, and affect the happiness and the virtue of others, both among his contemporaries and his successors. In the infinite complication of society, the false doctrine that calamity is punishment, and consequently the implication of sin, has been finally and irrevocably destroyed. No longer, since Plato and the Stoics, can it be sought to trace invariable correspondence between fortune and desert, or to suppose that God governs the world upon any mechanical theory of direct retribution. In God's rule the *lex talionis* does not obtain, the divine tit-for-tat has been finally discredited.<sup>1</sup> We must take, as Mr. Evelyn Abbott asserts that Sophocles had already taken, "a higher view of the nature" of that suffering which befalls the guiltless. "For Sophocles," he says, "the

---

that the master of the school, by reason of some political necessity, changes the arrangement of the usual hours of exercise, by which means some of those who wish to anoint themselves come too late; in like manner God, who takes care of the whole world as if it were a city committed to his charge, does sometimes cause the summer to resemble winter, and winter to assume the characteristics of spring, for the common benefit of the universe, even though some captains of ships, and some cultivators of the ground, may very likely be injured by this irregularity of the seasons." (Mangey, ii., p. 642, Mr. C. D. Yonge's translation. Cp. Drummond's *Philo*, II., pp. 58-62.)

<sup>1</sup> There is no more urgent need than to purify the Jewish liturgy from the many traces of this false and antiquated doctrine. Aristotle, describing a particular form of miscarriage, says contemptuously, "The women refer it to a divine agency," *τοῦτο δὲ τὸ πάθος ἀναφέρουσιν εἰς τὸ δαίμόνιον* (*Hist. Anim.* x. 3). A passage in the Mishnah (*Sabbath*, ii. 6) may be sadly referred to as a similar instance of human superstition; it should not be allowed to debase the Liturgy.

calamities of the guiltless are part of human life as a whole, not punishments dealt out to individuals. They assist in the general purposes of humanity, and thus at times, as in the case of Antigone, suffering comes near to the modern conception of self-sacrifice. They help to bring before us the true nature of life, and separate the accidental from the real. It is not prosperity and success, it is often failure and endurance, which become the most effective and truly real factors in the advancement of mankind.”<sup>1</sup>

Clearly discerning, as they did, that not every suffering was punishment, it may be thought somewhat surprising that the Stoics did not move forward to any clear doctrine of self-sacrifice for the common good. This apparent lacuna is partly explained, as the Master of Balliol has pointed out, when we call to mind “that the side of ethics which regards others is by the ancients merged in politics. But both in Plato and Aristotle, as well as in the Stoics, the social principle, though taking another form, is really far more prominent than in most modern treatises on ethics.”<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the burden of the Stoic teaching is mainly addressed to the individual. How is he to possess his soul in quietude and hope; how is he to live the true life of “nature” or reason; how is he to rise superior to the shocks of fortune, and to the wayward wantonness of mankind?

The doctrine of self-sacrifice and self-devotion needed, for its fullest expansion in theory and in practice, the enthusiasm of religion and the bond of a common brotherhood in faith and blood. One somehow feels that the cry of the Psalmist, “For thy sake, for thy sake, are we killed all the day long,” represents an interpretation of suffering higher than any Stoic could achieve, and one at the same time, not merely fitted for an elect minority of philosophers but for ordinary men and women, to whom, given the inspiration and the need, God has granted

---

<sup>1</sup> *Hellenica*, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> *Dialogues*, Vol. II., 3rd ed., p. 296.



the capacity, ordinary though they be, of self-sacrifice and martyrdom. And so, too, with the conceptions which created the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah; "Surely he bore our sicknesses and carried our pains: he was pierced because of our rebellions, crushed because of our iniquities; the punishment of our peace was upon him, and through his stripes we have been healed." This, the greatest interpretation or palliative of suffering which antiquity has produced, greater perhaps than its writer himself was aware of, owes its birth to religion rather than to philosophy, and not to Greece but to Judæa. Who can measure the influence which those words have had, an influence not merely confined to the creation of theological dogma, but wider and broader far? They have transformed and transfigured suffering for thousands and millions to whom, I must acknowledge, the sublimity of Plato, even "my Plato, the divine one, if men know the gods aright," could never have appealed. For the figure represented in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, of him who poured out his soul unto death for the sake of others, that they might find their ultimate peace through his sacrificial sufferings, "has sunk deep in the heart of the human race."<sup>1</sup> The palliative of suffering and of evil which was suggested by this wonderful chapter, has grown wholly independent of the dogma through which it became the common and permanent possession of mankind. And the great teacher who, of all others in our generation, was most wholly emancipated from theology and dogma, could "still own *that* life to be the highest which is a conscious voluntary sacrifice."<sup>2</sup> In the life of every day, no less than in great crises and mighty deeds; in the willing acceptance of suffering, sometimes self-chosen and sometimes inflicted from without; in the joyful sharing of a common burden; in the love which almost welcomes pain if so be that another's anguish be lessened; in the love, more glorious still, which bravely

---

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Jowett, in *Dialogues*, II., p. 296, 3rd ed.

<sup>2</sup> George Eliot, Proem to *Romola*.

carries the transferred weight of another's sin, here is the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, still exercising its potent influence for good, still explaining pain and explaining evil so far as any explanation is accessible or advisable for man.

I do not propose to say anything of the more purely philosophical theories as to the nature and origin of evil which are met with in Greek philosophy. I will only quote two passages in the illustration and explanation of which the two main currents of these theories might be followed up and down by the inquiring student. The first is an obscure aphorism from the *Encheiridion* of Epictetus: "As a mark is not set up for the purpose of missing the aim, so neither does the nature of evil exist in the world."<sup>1</sup> And the second is a famous observation of Plato in the *Theætetus*: "Evils, Theodorus, can never pass away; for there must always remain something which is antagonistic to good. Having no place among the gods in heaven, of necessity they hover around the mortal nature and this earthly sphere. Wherefore we ought to fly away from earth to heaven as quickly as we can; and to fly away means to become like God, as far as this is possible; and to become like him is to become holy, just, and wise."<sup>2</sup>

One more palliative of evil, however, remains to be mentioned, a palliative which relates especially to moral evil, and is still in frequent use in our own day. It is a more generalised form of an argument which has already come before us. It urges that a considerable amount of physical evil, and the preponderating bulk of moral evil, is man's own fault and his own creation. If an objector inquires, Why did God allow man to have the tendency or capacity for evil? the answer is that virtue depends upon freedom. "Why then, did He create a being capable of sinning?" "Only so could He create a being capable of obeying," replies Dr. Fairbairn. "An ability to do good implies the capability

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ench.*, xxvii. "The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound."

<sup>2</sup> *Theætetus*, 176 A, B.

to do evil.”<sup>1</sup> This argument may be traced, in the pages of Zeller, hither and thither through the long course of Greek philosophy. It is, perhaps, nowhere more clearly and confidently set forth than by Simplicius, the commentator of Epictetus, one of the very last of the heathen sages, who witnessed the closing of the school of Athens by Justinian, and carried his lore to the court of Khosru, king of Persia. In his long chapter on the obscure saying of Epictetus as to the nature of evil, which I have already quoted, Simplicius comes to the conclusion that the soul is the cause of evil, which it chooses (and hence creates) under the disguise of apparent good. “Having, then,” he joyfully exclaims, “discovered the origin of evil, let us with loud voice proclaim that God is herein guiltless. It is not he, but the soul, which works evil, and that, moreover, freely and of its own accord.” Precisely as in Dr. Fairbairn’s book of 1892, a supposed objector is made to say, “Why did God create a being capable of sinning?” so in Simplicius’s book of about the year 520 A.D. the difficulty is raised, that “God should not have allowed the soul the possibility of choosing evil.” And the answer is also curiously similar. There is no greater good than freedom of the will (ἡ αὐτεξουσιότης). “Remove it, and with it you destroy the possibility of virtue and the very nature of man (τὸ εἶδος ὅλον τὸ ἀνθρώπειον). There could no longer be such a thing as human temperance and justice, if their perversions were not likewise possible. The temperance and justice which could never become perverted might be angelic or divine; they would not be human.”<sup>2</sup>

A few words must now be said, in conclusion, bearing upon the last two of the five pre-suppositions, from the

<sup>1</sup> *Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 456, seq.—a most interesting section.

<sup>2</sup> Οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἔτι σωφροσύνη καὶ δικαιοσύνη ἀνθρωπίνη, εἰ μὴ καὶ παρὰ τρέπεσθαι πέφυκεν ἀπαράτρεπτός τε οὖσα, ἀγγελικὴ τις ἂν ἦν, καὶ οὐκ ἔτ ἀνθρωπίνη. (Simplicii *Commentarius in Enchirid.*, xxvii., ed. Dübner, pp. 79, 80.)

basis of which the modern Jew or Christian begins his arguments on the relation of God to man and of the methods of the divine rule. These were, the gradual progress of man's race in this world, and the limitless, if gradual, progress of the individual human soul in the life beyond the grave.

In a narrower form, the first of these pre-suppositions was the greatest stay and comfort to the ancient Israelite. The indomitable optimism of the Jews depended upon their faith in a golden future for the race. Before the Maccabæan era this faith was adequate for its purpose, without any coincident belief in a personal share of future blessedness, either through a resurrection on earth or by a spiritual immortality in heaven. Even when these other beliefs became the ordinary dogmas of the synagogue, the belief in Israel's ultimate triumph, with full implication of material and spiritual bliss, remained in force, and was always an important element in the total store of faith. A time would assuredly come when Israel as a whole would reap the reward both of past fidelity and past chastisement; the Messianic era of outward and inward beatitude, when sin would finally be vanquished and overcome, was the beacon goal in the light of which every suffering of the present was sufficiently and happily explained. It is obviously unnecessary to enter here into any detailed exposition of the Messianic idea. It differed from modern conceptions of progress not only in its national restrictions, but also in the supposed method of its advent and in the finality of its work. The modern conception is merely an optimistic belief in a gradual and indefinite amelioration of man's character and circumstances, developed and diffused throughout the area of the habitable globe. "What one is, why may not millions be?" The Jewish conception was of a sudden and miraculous transformation, swiftly succeeding to a universal and supernatural judgment, from such deficiencies as we see around us to-day to an ideal and permanent perfection. It is clear that this second

conception, while to most of us unacceptable because of its miraculous and supernatural character, is yet a far more stimulative and helpful doctrine for the general level of men than the somewhat shadowy theory of gradual and indefinite progress. That theory which has to struggle with many difficulties, both on its own view of the limitless past as well as through all that its actual opponents can argue against its validity for the present and the future, can hardly be expected to become a potent influence for good, except to "some rare nature, who may feel his duty to another generation or to another century almost as strongly as to his own."<sup>1</sup>

Whether in its Jewish or its modern form, the idea of progress was wanting to the Greeks. This palliative of evil was therefore denied to them. "In the absence of Hope," says Prof. Butcher, "and of an ideal of progress, we strike upon one great difference between the classical Greeks and the Hebrews. Not that the history of the Hebrews was one of progressive expansion and orderly development. It was so in a far less degree than that of the Hellenes, being in truth a long record of ever-recurring rebellions and late repentances. The nation was of all others the most full of inner contradictions; the higher and the lower self were never reconciled. Yet in the darkest hour of adversity the prophets did not despair of Israel. When Jerusalem was desolate, when the people was in captivity, and national existence had been crushed, the voice of prophecy speaks out the more confidently. It points back to the divine guidance that had watched over the race, and tells of the mighty destiny that was in store for Israel. Through the prophets an ideal and glorified national sentiment was created, transcending local limits, and intertwined with the highest hopes that could be conceived for humanity. They

---

<sup>1</sup> The quotation is from a splendid passage in Prof. Jowett's *Introduction to the Republic* (III., p. ccxxx.), in which he combines our two last "pre-suppositions" together, and compares them as motives with one another

looked to a spiritual restoration and triumph, which should be for the world at large the beginning of a glorious future. This ideal, ardently desired, possessed the mind of the pious Jew; it fed in him a secret fund of joy, and kept alive a spark of hope in a world of spiritual despair against the day when He who was 'the Desire of all nations' should come."<sup>1</sup>

Apart indeed from these religious aspirations of the Jews, "the idea of progress is of modern rather than of ancient date; and, like the idea of a philosophy of history, is not more than a century or two old. It seems to have arisen out of the impression left on the human mind by the growth of the Roman Empire and of the Christian Church, and to be due to the political and social improvements which they introduced into the world; and still more in our own century to the idealism of the first French Revolution and the triumph of American Independence; and in a yet greater degree to the vast material prosperity and growth of population in England and her colonies and in America. It is also to be ascribed in a measure to the greater study of the philosophy of history. The optimist temperament of some great writers has assisted the creation of it, while the opposite character has led a few to regard the future of the world as dark. The 'spectator of all time and of all existence' sees more of 'the increasing purpose which through the ages ran' than formerly; but to the inhabitant of a small state like Hellas the vision was necessarily limited like the valley in which he dwelt. There was no remote past on which his eye could rest, nor any future from which the veil was partly lifted up by the analogy of history. The narrowness of view, which to ourselves appears so singular, was to him natural, if not unavoidable."<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Some Aspects*, p. 158.

<sup>2</sup> Prof. Jowett, *Dialogues*, 3rd ed., III., p. ccxiii. Compare for other reflections upon the idea of progress, pp. clxxvii.-clxxix., cccxx. ; vol. II., pp. 177, 178.

There was, therefore, no ideal of perfection for mankind at large or even for Hellas in particular, trusting in whose certain advent the average Greek might endure, with more or less questioning heart, the troubles and sorrows of the present. Neither did he believe in the slow but sure amelioration of society by the gradual deepening and broadening of actual civilisation. And the philosophers in this respect were not raised above the aspirations and beliefs of the ordinary citizen; they merely philosophically justified his lack of hope and expressed it definitely in words. Plato drew up his scheme for the ideal State, but he does not seem to have imagined that it would ever be realised. In the *Laws* he even asserts that during "the vast and incalculable time which has elapsed since cities first existed or men were citizens of them, thousands and thousands of cities have come into being, and as many perished." He is disposed to credit the old "traditions about the many destructions of mankind, which have been occasioned by deluges and pestilences, and in many other ways, and of the disappearance of the arts, and of every other excellent invention of political or any other sort of wisdom," in these recurring epochs of universal ruin.<sup>1</sup>

He apparently believes that such a wave or cataclysm of destruction may again recur. Aristotle teaches a similar doctrine; nor is he, any more than Plato, as it would seem, either afflicted by or even cognisant of the mournfulness of his own words. "The same opinions," he says, "have arisen among mankind, not once or twice, but an innumerable number of times." And again, in a famous passage of the *Metaphysics*: "It has come down to us in the form of myths, from the most hoar antiquity, that the stars are gods, and that the divine embraces all nature. All the rest is mythical addition, for the better persuasion of the multitude, and for the observance of the laws and the common interests of society. By mythical addition is meant that

---

<sup>1</sup> *Laws*, 676, 677; cp. *Timaëus*, 22, 23.

which speaks of the human or animal form of the gods, and of other matters like unto these. If these accretions are removed, the remainder, that the primal substances were thought to be gods, may be regarded as divine revelation. And since every art and philosophy has probably been discovered and destroyed many times, this doctrine may be the remnant of such, preserved for us until now.”<sup>1</sup> The deduction, though not expressly stated, so far as I am aware, seems nevertheless obvious: even as the past has been composed of alternate progress and decay, of advancing culture and ruinous retrogression, so will the civilisation of the present be doomed also to disappear.<sup>2</sup>

The belief in a compensatory life of happiness or misery after death, regulated according to the ethical quality of the life on earth, arose at an earlier period in the religious and ethical development of the Greeks than of the Hebrews, but it never became so universally accepted a dogma. There is no need to recite even in driest outline the origin and history of this belief, whether in Greece or in Judæa; it is only necessary to point out its effect upon men’s conception of divine retribution and of God’s part in the phenomenon of evil. That effect was closely similar in either land—an effect, indeed, which beliefs of immortality must almost of necessity produce wherever they appear. First of all, there is the simple argument, which has never lost, and will perhaps never lose, its consoling efficacy. If there be an eternal life after death, the calamities which man endures on earth are enormously lessened in importance and perplexity. Faith may cast any glamour which it pleases over a world the laws and conditions of which must ever rest unknown to all generations of mortal man; and if it

---

<sup>1</sup> *De Cælo*, 270, b. 19. *Metaph.*, xii. 8, 1074b, *ad fin.*, with Schwegeler’s notes. Cp. *Pol.* vii. 10, 1329b, etc.

<sup>2</sup> A sentence or two might have been added about the Pythagorean and Stoic idea of world-cycles, according to which notion one universe succeeds another, and the new cycle exactly resembles the old one. Cp. Zeller, I., p. 443 (ed. 5), and III., 1, p. 154.



be that in that world misery is reserved for the sinner, and never breaks in upon the ceaseless happiness of the good, the problem of at least the simpler manifestations and phases of evil is reduced to a minimum. The balance will be redressed "in another place": the allocation of joy and sorrow, faulty on earth, will be patently equable in "heaven," and the meaning of the suffering in the earlier acts of our human drama will become explained and justified in a last act which has no ending.

Once more, if to a short life on earth there may succeed a heavenly immortality, the value of earthly pleasures and the agony of earthly pains are alike lessened. Only those pleasures and only those pains become really important which affect the eternal life that follows upon the temporal life; in other words, the pleasures of knowledge and of goodness, the pains of ignorance and of sin.<sup>1</sup> In this respect the doctrine of immortality fits in with that conception of suffering as a discipline and a purge, which has already been noticed. The difficulty of physical evil, of evils such as sickness, poverty and early death, is almost entirely removed; while for moral evil the old palliative of a necessary freedom remains in force. Prosperity can easily be construed into temptation, and while suffering is a blessing in disguise, the earthly well-being of the wicked is but the prelude to an awful retribution in another world. Whereas the Psalmists had to buoy themselves up with wistful expectations of the ultimate downfall of the proud transgressor even upon earth, the full believer in retributive immortality was raised above even the faintest necessity of doubt. Read first the 37th and 73rd Psalms; then compare with these the story of the seven martyred brethren in the 2nd or 4th book of Maccabees, and the contrast is strikingly apparent. The righteous man, in the Greek phrase, departs with "sweet hopes" for the future, and these hopes enable him to endure with complacency the inequalities of outward fortune upon earth. Thus Isocrates

---

<sup>1</sup> Cp. *Phædo*, 107 C, D. 114 E.

counsels Demonicus: "Do not envy those who become rich by injustice. Choose rather the lot of those who have been injured through their goodness. Good men, if they have no other advantage over the wicked, are superior to them in noble hopes."<sup>1</sup>

So far, then, as the mere ordinary examples of physical evil are concerned—and the darker instances of that evil did not seem to perplex them more sorely—the Greeks could find in the doctrine of a future life a satisfactory and sufficing explanation; and even Plato, who has done more than any other man to prove and to maintain the inherent nobility of virtue, and its essential choice-worthiness over vice, needed the doctrine of immortality for the sake of divine justice, and from the necessity of retribution. Prof. Zeller says: "A belief in retribution after death was indispensable for Plato's moral and religious view of the world. However firm his conviction that the unconditioned worth of goodness could be proved without any regard to an hereafter, he held that there would be a discord in the universal order, and that divine justice would be at fault, if, whatever might have been the case in this world, at least after death good was not surely rewarded and evil punished. He therefore insists on the doctrine of future retribution, not only in passages where some concession to popular notions might be suspected for didactic or political reasons, but also in the strictest scientific inquiries in a connection which excludes the possibility of thinking that he is putting forward anything else than his own serious opinion. He expressly notices what comfort the prospect of immortality affords to the dying, and what an urgent summons to personal self-improvement and a blameless life lies in the thought that on it depends our fate for endless time; and he sees in the acceptance of the theory of future retribution so immediate a consequence of his theory of

---

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Schmidt, *Ethik der alten Griechen*, I., 107. Isocrates, *Ad Demonicum*, I. 39.

immortality that the latter stands or falls with the validity of the former.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus in the hands of Plato the doctrine of immortality gives an added glory to virtue and an added horror to vice, while it deprecates the importance and transforms the character of outward and earthly misfortune or prosperity. For whereas to the popular imagination, as even fragments of Pindar reveal to us, the joys and pains of the next world were material and sensuous, to Plato the soul's beatitude was purely spiritual, while a conscious forfeiture of the fruition of truth, beauty and goodness, as in themselves they are, was its sorest and deadliest pain. But in the form which immortality assumed to Plato, not only was moral evil enormously enhanced in dread significance and horror, but its very existence was more satisfactorily explained. The responsibility, as it seemed, was firmly seated upon the soul's own shoulders, and finally removed from the shoulders of God. For the immortality of the soul in one direction involved its immortality in the other, and with the life after death were closely united the dogmas of pre-existence and transmigration.

The theory of metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls, began among the Orphic theologians in Greece, and was taught by Pythagoras and Empedocles. Strange as such a theory has become to us now, yet “if we survey the whole human race, it has been as influential and as widely spread” as the ordinary dogma of immortality.<sup>2</sup> It is clear how powerfully such a doctrine could help to explain both physical and moral evil. The explanation, even so, is not conclusive. It merely puts back the origin of the difficulty some thousands of years; but just as it is often a relief to postpone a decision, so is a difficulty postponed, or rather thrust back, often regarded as a difficulty solved. If it be

---

<sup>1</sup> *Phil. der Griechen*, II., 1. p. 837, 4th ed. (I have partly followed Miss Alleyne's translation.)

<sup>2</sup> Jowett's *Dialogues of Plato*, Vol. II., p. 322, 3rd ed. Cp. Zeller, I., pp. 56-66, 5th ed., etc.

assumed that souls were eternal and enjoyed originally a heavenly beatitude, the question still remains, Why was the capacity or occasion granted to them to fall from their high estate and become ensnared into the world of matter and corporeality? To this question Plato gives us no satisfying answer. On the other hand, granted the first descent, and much which seemed inexplicable becomes clear. In the Neo-Platonic philosophy the doctrine of pre-existence seems to have been widely used to account even for outward adversity; yet Plotinus introduces the explanation rather shamefacedly. "As regards those things which unjustly happen to the righteous, such as injuries, or poverty, or disease, are these," he says, "to be regarded as the consequence of former sins?" He seems to assume that they are, and for the ethical justification of such an arrangement, he can only say, "if the sufferer is good, the end of these misfortunes will be for his benefit."<sup>1</sup>

Plato himself, so far as I can see, chiefly employs the doctrine to explain the varying lives of men and to justify the providence of God. A man's guilt in this world is mainly to be accounted for by his own free will (for there is always a wide margin of responsibility), but to some extent it is also the result of his, or rather his soul's conduct in former existences. We may profitably compare with this notion the modern theory of heredity, which also seems partly to lessen and partly to heighten the moral responsibility of man. In the famous myth of the Republic, he represents a company of souls making their way, at the close of the long period of reward or punishment which follows upon earthly life, towards the place of choice for a new span of mortal existence. "Mortal souls," they are told, "behold a new cycle of life and mortality. Your genius will not be allotted to you, but you will choose your genius; and let him who draws the first lot have the first choice, and the life which he chooses shall be his destiny.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ennead*, iv. 3, 16. Zeller, III. 2, p. 563.

Virtue is free, and as a man honours or dishonours her, he will have more or less of her; the responsibility is with the chooser—God is justified" (*θεὸς ἀναιτίος*).

First the lots are scattered and then "the samples of lives" in multitude, so that "even for the last comer, if he chooses wisely and will live diligently, there is appointed a happy and not undesirable existence. Let not him who chooses first be careless, and let not the last despair."<sup>1</sup> The kinds or samples of life which are put before the souls for choice, including even the lives of animals—though here, as it would seem, Plato must not be taken too seriously—embrace every possible condition. Moreover, elements of a purely physical character are mixed up in the samples, as for example, wealth and poverty, health and disease. By this Plato seems to mean that the variety of outward circumstance cannot be allocated by ethical desert; with some external goods some external evils are necessarily conjoined in endless diversity of blending and admixture. Nor can Plato entirely dispense with a small element of chance. That is involved in the choosing of the lots.<sup>2</sup>

Though the whole story teems with difficulties, its main outline seems seriously intended. A previous existence will partly explain the characters of men so far as these are the reflection of their environment; it will also partly explain their outward condition so far as that condition is independent of character and will. But seeing that chance admittedly enters into the order and method in which the lots are chosen, the final result would be that outward circumstance has a three-fold cause. It is partly within our power to control or to determine; it is partly induced by the choice of the soul before birth, which choice is itself influenced by the character of a previous life, and it is partly the product of an uneliminable element of chance.<sup>3</sup>

Both aspects of eternal life, whether before birth or after

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, 617 E, 619 B.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.*, 619 F.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. Zeller, II., 1, 4th ed., 817-855, and especially 851-852.

death, have the same theological and ethical tendency. Both confirm the absolute goodness of God, and both insist that the soul, with its own evil and its own good, is the only thing about which man should care. "Giving the name of evil to the life which will make his soul more unjust, and the name of good to the life which will make his soul more just, all else he will disregard; for we have seen and know that this is the best choice both in life and after death."<sup>1</sup>

One more important aspect of Plato's doctrine of immortality remains to be noted. Its object is not limited to retribution. Though the "reward" of virtue and the punishment of vice are included in the programme, and for exceptional sinners that punishment is eternal, the greater purpose of immortality is educational. While the wicked are gradually purified of their iniquity, the wise become wiser, and the good better. The beatitude of the righteous is reward and progress in one. "Eternal process moving on, from state to state the spirit walks." Plato thus advances a little way towards the more modern conception of immortality, according to which its need or object is not the mere redress of earthly inequalities, not the mere punishment of the wicked, still less any outward reward of the good, but the development of the soul's capacity for truth and goodness and love. It is the suffering which stunts the growth of moral excellence, the outward inequality which precludes the soul from reaching its full capacity of wisdom, that constitute the real theological puzzle which the dogma of immortality is called upon to explain. The martyr seems far more intelligible to us than the idiot; the most degraded specimen of the human race, whose degradation is due to his environment and parentage rather than to his own will, cries out more loudly against Providence than either the prosperous sinner or the man of splendid virtue crushed by calamity and disease.

We have now noticed briefly the main views of Greek

---

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, 618 E.

and Hebrew concerning divine retribution, and their main explanatory palliatives of evil and of the unequal correspondence between circumstance and desert. One such palliative, indeed, has been omitted, partly from lack of time and partly because it is, on the whole, the least interesting and valuable; the palliative, I mean, which accounts for evil upon the hypothesis of evil principles, or deities. Plutarch accepted the hypothesis, but his resultant explanation of evil might be criticised even more successfully than those arguments of Chrysippus which he ridiculed so scornfully. Omitting that hypothesis, which was recently defended by no less distinguished a theologian than Dr. Edwin Abbott, we have seen how advancing thought, both in Greece and in Judæa, purified its conception of God's relation to man, and then was obliged to find fresh explanations of the difficulties which the very process of purification had created or enhanced. As God became more truly God, the difficulties which the phenomena of evil suggest multiplied tenfold; though, on the other hand, some palliatives arose which were more worthy of divine goodness and love. And our nobler faith is willing and able to bear the burden of a greater doubt. We would fain realise the problem of evil to its fullest intensity of horror rather than deflect an inch from that self-conscious ideal of wisdom and love which has become the necessary synonym of God.

In the course of our inquiry we have also learned how some old and unsatisfactory views have reappeared, cleansed and purified, in another form. Thus the old conception of family or tribal solidarity and of transmitted punishment was properly attacked and properly abandoned; but the solidarity of the family and of mankind has in another form reappeared, and become the condition of a doctrine of self-sacrifice and responsibility which seems one of the best palliatives of evil that has hitherto been devised. That God has rights like a man, which, if infringed, he must defend; that he enjoys his capacity of divine ven-

geance upon the sinner and the rebellious, are ancient opinions, which, as we have seen, were openly condemned by the Greek philosopher, and by the Hebrew prophet and sage. Yet, while the question of Elihu, "If thou sinnest, what doest thou unto him, or if thou be righteous, what givest thou him?" represents a great truth, we also feel that even God himself must not, if I may say so, be wholly sundered from emotion. God hates sin, though not the sinner; he does greatly care for the souls which himself has made. "The Lord loveth the righteous; he taketh pleasure in them that fear him. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great loving-kindness." We come back, in a sense, to the "human" conception of God, though with a difference and in greater humility of spirit and of speech.

Pondering upon the various conceptions of God's relation to the world which have passed before us, it would seem as if most aspects of the problem had been touched upon by one or other of these two nations of antiquity, but that neither had sounded the problem to its depth, and that both had been too often content with inadequate explanations. The vastness of sentient misery and evil was scarcely realised; the Hebrew stuck too closely to the mere disparity between prosperity and desert, while as we have seen and know, the problem of moral evil and of moral deformity is so far harder and more important. Again, while the Greek philosopher taught that outward adversity might be a means of ethical progress, he did not perceive that very often it simply stunted all spiritual capacity and crushed out of it the possibility of growth. It is unnecessary to enlarge upon this painful topic, yet we see clearly that any modern indictment of Providence would be very different from any ancient indictment; its counts would be more numerous and more complicated, and it would put the stress in different places. It would also not confine itself to man, but include the cause of the animals for whose suffering no compensatory immortality



is commonly believed to atone. While the law of the Pentateuch preaches kindness to animals, and Plutarch condemns hunting, I do not find that either Greek or Hebrew thought is agitated by the sufferings of animals as an argument against the justice of God. So far as the solutions are concerned, we see that the Greeks, in certain respects, advanced further than the Hebrews. The latter (I am limiting myself to the Old Testament) always clung to the idea that the supreme law of God must be reward and retribution. Hence they seek to maintain the truth of that law even for the life on earth, however much the facts testify against its accuracy, and even late writers repeat it over and over again with the energy of despair. M. Renan has finely argued that the dogma of a resurrection was much more due to the necessity of maintaining the law of retribution, if not for this life then for another, than to any influence from Persia or Greece. The Greeks did not directly attack the propriety of the law, but they modified it both by interpreting reward and punishment as an inward concomitant, and not as an outward adjunct of goodness and badness respectively, and also by laying far less stress upon the question of physical evil, and the lack of correspondence between prosperity and desert. As for us, while we do not deny the law of retribution entirely as one of the principles of divine rule, we yet perceive that it is only a subordinate principle, and that it deserves no higher place. Poetical justice, we have learnt to see, is neither always the justice of fact, nor is it always, of propriety and right, the justice of God. The Talmud speaks of those who, having lived a life-time of sin, by an ultimate hour of repentance have attained the blessedness of the "world to come." Such an award, utterly disproportionate though it be, we instinctively feel is in accordance with divine love. Nor do we for a moment suppose that the good man who has endured much suffering should enjoy more bliss in another life than the good man whose life has been a long

succession of undisturbed felicities. Indeed, the future life seems in one sense more needed for the wicked than for the good, for the morally feeble and the spiritually deformed than for those who have already reached to a high level of ethical nobility. They at least have not been created in vain, while for the others, if their time is not to come, of what value have their lives been to themselves or to others? We crave another life, as Plato partly saw, not for reward and not for punishment, but that we may know God better and love him more, that the stains of sin may be washed out, and that every human soul may at last prove worthy of the God who has created it.

Once more. We have listened in the course of this lecture to many noble passages, both from Hebrew and Hellenic lips, and we have been told of many palliatives of a great problem, which are not only of much historical interest, but which, in a somewhat modified form, and as variously assimilated and reproduced by ourselves, may yet appeal to us and help us in times of difficulty and distress. We listen to them reverently and accept them gladly for what they are worth—palliatives but not solutions, suggestive hints but not complete explanations. If, indeed, the Great Problem were explained, where would be the need of faith? and if faith lost its need or its difficulty, it would lose its glory. But whatever may be the knowledge of the angels or of ourselves in another world, in this life the faith which, in those words of the great scholar that I have quoted so often, “throws itself without reserve into the arms of God,” is surely one of the most glorious of the varied capacities and endowments of man. Perhaps this reflection is itself a palliative to be added to those others from which we may still draw comfort and hope; and as, the more vividly the problem is realised, the more vivid must be the faith which can yet believe, so, finally, of our own private sorrows and disappointments, which on the old view may seem undeserved, or on a higher view may seem needless and wanton, we may also struggle

to prove that the greater the blow or the keener the sorrow the deeper the purification, the more single and devoted the will to which the suffering and the sorrow may lead. Let me end by quoting to you some words of a wise old man—he is about to celebrate his seventieth birthday—which, on reading them a few days ago, struck me at once as an apposite conclusion for the present lecture. They are themselves the last words of a lecture on *Wehmuth und Heiterkeit*, and their author is Professor Steinthal :

“If you have a great sorrow, keep it sacred, and it will prove to you an inward guard and shield against the petty griefs and annoyances from which in external fashion we can never wholly keep ourselves free. And how can what is small and petty affect him who has something truly great enshrined within his soul ?”

C. G. MONTEFIORE.

---